

J J SNYDER



THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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THE LIBERTY BOYS' SHARPSHOOTERS; OR, THE BATTLE OF THE KEGS. *By HARRY MOORE.*



The "Liberty Boys" carried the kegs and placed them in the water, while Dick pushed them away from the float with a pike pole. Suddenly one of the kegs struck a rock and exploded.

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CHAPTER I.

SELECTED FOR DANGEROUS WORK.

On the 11th day of September of the year 1777 the battle of the Brandywine was fought.

The patriotic army, under Generals Washington, Greene, Wayne and Sullivan, was defeated and forced to retreat toward Chester.

While defeated, however, the patriots were not discouraged.

They had killed and wounded as many redcoats as they had lost men, and felt that the victory for the British was not much to boast of.

General Washington, the evening after the battle, called a council of his officers and the situation was discussed earnestly.

He had received news that a patriot force had been successful up in Mohawk Valley, and believed that if General Howe and the British army could be kept employed in the vicinity of Philadelphia long enough Burgoyne, who was coming down from Canada, would be forced to surrender by the patriot army operating near Albany.

He told his officers this, and they agreed with him.

"The thing to do," said General Greene, "is to keep General Howe busy."

"Yes; we must delay his advance toward Philadelphia as long as possible," said General Wayne.

"Right," agreed General Washington; "after he reaches Philadelphia and gets settled there he may send at least a portion of his army to the aid of Burgoyne; so it will be a good plan for us to keep him from reaching Philadelphia for as long a period as possible."

"How far is it to the city?" asked General Sullivan.
"About twenty-five miles," replied General Washington.
"That isn't far; I fear we cannot hold the British back very long."

"I'll tell you one thing that would have a good effect in holding the British back," said General Greene.

"What is that?" asked the commander-in-chief.

"Sharpshooters."

The commander-in-chief looked at the speaker thoughtfully.

Then he nodded and said:

"Yes, if we had some sharpshooters, daring fellows who would not be afraid to venture close enough to the British army to pick off soldiers, it would be a great aid in holding the enemy in check."

"There are some good marksmen among the soldiers," said Sullivan.

"Yes, but the trouble is in finding men who are good marksmen and who are also young enough and lively enough to get close to the British army and fire deadly shots. That is dangerous work, you know."

"So it is," agreed General Greene; "but I think I know where we may find just the men we are looking for."

"Where?" asked the commander-in-chief.

"I'll tell you. You know we have in our army a company of youths who are called the Liberty Boys of '76?"

General Washington started and his face lighted up.

"Yes, indeed; they have done splendid work for us," he said.

"Exactly; and I have learned that they are not only dashing, desperate fighters in a battle, but they are dead shots as well."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; I have seen them shooting, for practice, at various times, and they are all remarkable marksmen. They would be the best men we could find for the sharpshooting work we have in mind."

General Washington nodded.

"I have no doubt you are right," he said; "if they are as good shots as their commander, Dick Slater, is a scout and spy, then they must be extraordinarily good."

"Well, you will find them so, I am sure."

The commander-in-chief pondered awhile and then said:

"I will send for Captain Slater and see what he has to say about the matter."

He summoned his orderly and told him to hunt up Dick Slater, the captain of the Liberty Boys, and bring him to the spot where the council was being held.

The orderly departed on the errand, and was gone twenty minutes; then he returned, accompanied by a handsome youth of about nineteen years.

The youth in question was a well-built fellow, with firm chin and jaws and keen blue-gray eyes. At a glance anyone would set him down as being unusually intelligent.

He had already, in the little more than a year that he had been in the army, done a great deal for the great cause.

In addition to leading his company in desperate dashes on the field of battle, he was a most successful scout and spy. Indeed, his equal was not believed to exist in either the British or patriot armies, and as a result of his wonderful work in this line he had earned and been given the title of "The Champion Spy of the Revolution."

Dick saluted the commander-in-chief and the other officers and said in a pleasant, musical voice:

"You sent for me, your excellency?"

"Yes, Captain Slater; I have some work which I think it possible you may be willing to undertake."

"What is the work, sir?"

"Sharpshooting."

Dick started and an eager look appeared in his eyes.

"You mean that you wish my men to engage in sharpshooting work?" he asked.

"Yes."

"That we shall keep as near the British as possible and pick the redcoats off one at a time, as opportunity arises?"

"That is it exactly, Dick. It is desirable that we hold the British back and detain them as much as possible. If I could do so I would like to detain the British ten days at least on the road to Philadelphia."

"We shall be glad to undertake the sharpshooting work, your excellency," said Dick, his eyes sparkling; "and we will do all we can to detain the enemy."

"I believe that, Dick; and are the majority of your men good shots?"

"Dead shots, all of them, sir."

General Greene nodded.

"That is what I told General Washington, Dick," he said.

"Very good," said the commander-in-chief; "I have had ample proof that your Liberty Boys do not know the mean-

ing of the word fear, and so if they are, as you say, dead shots, they will make splendid sharpshooters."

"I will promise that they shall do their very best, sir," said Dick; "and I believe that we can do good work; if we don't, it will be because we can't, that is all."

"I am sure of that. Well, when can you enter upon this work?"

"At once, sir."

"Not tonight?"

"Yes."

"But you certainly can do no sharpshooting at night!"

"Yes we can. We have practiced shooting in the dark; all that is necessary is for us to see the object we are to shoot at. Soldiers in the light thrown out by a campfire are not safe from us, even though we are in the dark and are unable to see the sights on our muskets. We have practiced till we can shoot almost as straight under such circumstances as when it is broad daylight."

"Very good; that is all the better. Go to work just as soon as you like, but be careful and don't let the British capture you."

"We will be careful, sir."

Dick remained with the commander-in-chief and staff only long enough to receive instructions, and then saluted and went back to where the Liberty Boys were quartered.

There were one hundred of these youths.

They were all about the age of Dick, and they were handsome, brave and dashing fellows, ready to take their lives in their hands at any moment for the good of the Revolution.

These youths had been interested and somewhat excited when the orderly came and told Dick that he was wanted by the commander-in-chief, and as soon as Dick put in an appearance they besieged him with questions.

"What did General Washington want?"

"What is up, Dick?"

"Is there work ahead for us?"

"Tell us the news, old man."

Such were a few of the remarks made by the youths.

"I think we will have some work to do, boys," replied Dick; "that is, if you are willing to undertake it."

"You needn't be afraid on that score, old man," said Bob Estabrook; "it would have to be a mighty dangerous bit of work that we would be unwilling to undertake."

"Tell us what it is that the commander-in-chief wants us to do," said Mark Morrison.

Then Dick told them.

When they learned that the commander-in-chief wished them to do some sharpshooting and make an attempt to delay the British in this manner, they were delighted.

"That is just the work for me, Dick!" said Bob Estabrook; "I would rather do sharpshooting than eat when I am hungry."

"And so would I!"

"And I!"

"And I!"

The youths were unanimous in the matter. The work of sharpshooting was just suited to their taste.

Dick had known this would be the case so was not at all surprised.

"I am glad you are all willing to enter upon this work," he said; "I told General Washington I thought you would be."

"You should have told him that you knew we would be not only willing, but glad to enter upon the work, Dick," said Bob.

"Well, I was sure of it, but thought it best not to be too positive in my statements."

"When do we go to work, Dick?" asked Sam Sanderson.

"Right away."

"Tonight, eh?"

"Yes; I think we may be able to pick off some of the red-coats at night as well as in the daytime."

"We can try, at any rate," said Bob.

The youths knew it was only about a mile and a half to the British lines, so they left their horses in the encampment and started off afoot.

They walked at a fair pace till they thought they were getting close to the British lines, and then they made their way slowly and cautiously.

Suddenly they heard the challenge, given in a sharp, stern voice:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

CHAPTER II.

A PECULIAR MAN.

One of the British sentinels had heard them. They were closer to the British lines than they had thought they were.

Of course the Liberty Boys stopped instantly.

They remained perfectly still.

They could just see the glimmer of light from the British campfires in the distance and had not supposed they were so close to the picket line.

The youths now put into effect the plan that had been decided upon. They separated and scattered out.

In this way they would be better able to get past the sentinels and close enough to the British encampment to bring down a few of the redcoats.

The Liberty Boys were experts in woodcraft, and this was of great value to them in cases like the present one. They moved with all the stealth of the redman of the forest and did not experience much difficulty in getting past the sentinels.

When they had succeeded in doing this they moved to the right and to the left and gradually surrounded the encampment.

This was in accordance with Dick's instructions.

He realized that it would be impossible for them to remain and fire into the encampment more than once or

twice, and he wanted all the youths to fire at about the same time.

By so doing it would be possible to bring down nearly as many redcoats as there were sharpshooters.

In the daytime it would have been possible to bring down practically all that were aimed at, but in the night a percentage would be missed and a goodly number of the others would be only wounded.

Dick waited till he was sure his men had succeeded in getting into position. Then he gave them a few minutes more in which to select their targets and take aim as well as was possible in the darkness; then he gave the signal.

Crack, crack, crack, crack, crack!

First there came the individual reports of the muskets in the hands of the youths who were quickest in pulling trigger, and then followed the roar of practically all the rest of the weapons.

It came as a clap of thunder out of a clear sky to the British.

They had not been expecting anything of the kind. They had not anticipated danger, for they supposed their sentinels were capable of attending to their work; but they were rudely awakened from their dream of security.

The crash of the hundred muskets sounded in their ears, and overtoppled at least seventy-five of the soldiers who had been seated at the campfires nearest the edge of the encampment.

Shrieks and groans went up from the wounded.

Yells of rage and astonishment, as well as of horror, escaped the lips of the British.

They leaped to their feet and seized their muskets.

Many fired wildly into the timber, as though they might in this manner succeed in killing some of the sharpshooters. In this they failed, however, for the Liberty Boys were looking for something of the kind and were safely ensconced behind trees.

The British officers rushed forth from their tents and inquired the meaning of it all.

They gave orders for the soldiers to charge into the timber, and this was done, hundreds of soldiers rushing in among the trees, muskets in hand, and it would have fared badly with the Liberty Boys had they been there.

But the youths were not there.

They were too wily to be caught thus.

Dick had given them full instructions, and the instant they fired they began moving back away from the encampment.

They made very good progress, and when they had passed the sentinels they moved even more rapidly, and were soon far enough away so that they felt safe.

An hour later they were gathered together again, and it was found, on calling the roll, that all were there, with one exception.

That exception was Bob Estabrook.

This youth was missing and Dick, knowing how daring and reckless his comrade could be, was anxious regarding him.

"I wonder what can have happened to Bob?" he remarked.

"Hard telling," replied Mark Morrison; "he's such a reckless fellow that he may have remained to get another shot at the redcoats."

"I hardly think he would do that, Mark; he understood that we were to get together again as soon as we had gotten away from the vicinity of the encampment, and I feel sure that something has happened to him."

"Well, what is to be done?"

"I am going to go in search of him."

"And the rest of us?"

"Will remain here till I return."

"What if you don't return?"

"Well, in that case, go back to the patriot encampment and report to General Washington."

"We would much rather stay out and try to rescue you if you should be captured, Dick; or to get revenge on the British if you should be killed."

"Well, do that, then."

"All right; that will suit us better."

This settled, Dick stole away in the direction of the British encampment.

He knew he was taking big chances in doing this, for the camp was aroused and a sharp lookout would be kept, and he was in great danger of being discovered and captured.

But he did not hesitate an instant.

His friend and comrade was missing, and he would learn what had become of him, or die trying.

Bob and Dick thought more of each other, perhaps, than any other two in the company. They lived on adjoining farms in Westchester county, New York, not far from Tarrytown, and they had been playmates and companions all their lives. They had hunted, fished and swam together; they had gone to school together and, more than all, each was in love with the other's sister.

This last was a very strong tie between the two, and in going in search of Bob, Dick felt that he was working in the interests of his sister Edith, who loved Bob dearly.

And now, while Dick is advancing hoping to learn what has become of Bob, we will see what has happened to him.

Bob had fired when the signal was given and had started to retreat the same as the rest did, but he had gone only a short distance when he suddenly felt himself seized from behind in such strong hands as to make his struggles unavailing—for he did struggle with all his might.

He supposed, of course, that he had been seized by a British sentinel, and that he would at once be taken to the encampment; but he found that he was mistaken, for the person who had seized him forced him to walk away from the camp.

Bob was willing to walk in that direction, however, so did not hold back; he felt that he would rather have to deal with one enemy than with the entire British army.

They made their way along and were not challenged.

Presently they were far enough away so that the shrieks and groans of the wounded redcoats could not be heard,

and presently the yelling of those who were trying to overtake the sharpshooters became faint.

Now that they were far enough from the British encampment to nullify the danger from that source, Bob made up his mind to try to make his escape from his captor.

He waited till he had what he deemed a fair opportunity and then made a desperate effort to break away from the man.

He was not successful; the man was too strong for him.

"Et's no use; ye kain't git erway," the man said, with a chuckle; "ye mought ez well take et eezy."

"Who are you, and why have you captured me?" asked Bob.

The man chuckled again.

"I'll tell ye thet purty soon," was the reply; "thar hain't no hurry, s' fur ez I kin see."

"Oh, all right; just as you please."

"Yas, thet's ther way et'll hev ter be—jes' ez I please."

Bob said no more, but walked along, and all the time he was waiting for another opportunity to make an attempt to escape.

The man seemed to divine his intentions, for he said:

"Ye kain't git erway, so don' try et enny more."

He had hold of Bob's wrists, and the youth, although very strong, was unable to free his arms and had to acknowledge that the man was right.

After a walk of a mile, so it seemed to Bob, they came to a small cabin standing on the bank of a creek. There was a light shining through the one window, and when they came to the door Bob's captor gave it a kick and called out:

"Open ther door, Em'ly."

There was the sound of footsteps—light ones—and ther the door opened, revealing a girl of about seventeen years, who stared at the two in amazement. She was a pretty girl Bob noted, but rather sad-looking, he thought.

"Oh, it's you, is it, father?" the girl said, in a sweet, musical voice; "and who is this with you?"

"I'll tell ye all erbout et in er minnet, Em'ly; git outer ther way, so's we kin come in."

The girl stepped to one side and gave Bob a look that he interpreted as being one of pity.

He walked unhesitatingly into the cabin, the man following, still holding to the youth's wrists.

"Shut an' bar ther door, Em'ly," ordered the man.

The girl obeyed.

"Now bring me er peece uv rope ter tie this feller's hands with."

The girl did as told, and on being ordered to do so by the man, wound the rope around Bob's wrists and tied it.

"Set down, young feller," said the man, pointing to a stool, and Bob took the seat indicated and for the first time got a look at his captor.

The man in question was a rough-looking fellow, and was undoubtedly a hunter. He did not look enough like

the girl to be her father, Bob thought, but it was possible that she got her good looks from her mother.

"This fellow is a scoundrel, and I'll bet on it," thought Bob; "but the girl is good-hearted, or I miss my guess."

The man looked down at Bob for a few moments with an evil grin on his face, and then said:

"I s'pose ye'd like ter know who I am?"

"If you wish to enlighten me," coolly.

"Oh, et don' matter much, I s'pose; but I'll tell ye. Hev ye ever heerd tell uv Donald Dunton?"

Bob shook his head.

"I don't think I ever have," he said.

"Waal, ye'll hear about me before long," with a grim smile; "I'm goin' ter make myself known ter everybody, an' that purty soon."

"Is that so?" said Bob.

"Yes."

"How are you going to go about doing it?" Somehow the man interested Bob and he wanted to find out what the fellow meant.

"Oh, ye want to know that, do ye?"

"Yes, if you don't mind."

"I don't mind; I jes' as lieve tell ye as not."

"Very well; then tell me how you are going to make yourself known to everybody."

"By puttin' er stop ter ther war."

Bob started in amazement. He saw that the man was in earnest, but the statement was so absurd that he did not understand how the man could make it so seriously. With a view to drawing Dunton out and learning what he meant, Bob said:

"How are you going to stop the war?"

The answer came quickly and fiercely:

"By killin' George Washington!"

CHAPTER III.

DUNTON DISAPPEARS.

Bob started.

He stared at the man in amazement, not unmixed with horror.

He now understood what the fellow meant when he said he would make himself known to everybody. If he were to kill the commander-in-chief of the patriot armies of America he would certainly make himself known to everybody. There was no doubt regarding this.

Bob glanced at the girl to see what effect the man's statement had on her. He noted that she was paler and that there was a look of horror in her eyes.

"Jove, I believe that she thinks her father capable of doing what he threatens!" thought Bob.

Aloud he said, turning his eyes again on the man:

"Do you mean to say that you intend to try to kill General Washington?"

The man nodded.

"Thet is jest whut I am goin' ter do!" he declared.

"But you will find it a very difficult and dangerous task," said Bob.

The man made a gesture.

"Oh, I know that," he declared; "but I kin do et."

"I don't think you can; but even if you could it would not end the war."

"Ye think et wouldn'?"

"I am sure of it; there are other generals who could take his place and carry on the war as he has been doing."

"Yas, theer air other gin'rals, but they hain't Washingtions, by er long shot. He is ther head an' front uv ther hull bizness."

"There is no doubt regarding the fact that Washington is a great general."

"Not ther least mite uv doubt, but he mus' eether resign frum his persishun er die!"

Bob looked at the speaker with interest.

"You are going to give him a chance, then?" he asked; "you are not going to kill him right away, without warning?"

"No; that's w'y I ketched ye. I wanter sen' er message ter Gin'r'l Washington."

"Asking him to resign?"

"Yas—tellin' 'im ter resign er take ther consequences, w'ich will be death!"

Bob began to breathe easier. He felt that all would come out right; he was to be set free and given a message to carry back to the patriot encampment. That was all he cared for; he was willing to risk anything the Tory might do later on. That the fellow might make an attempt to kill General Washington Bob did not doubt, but he did not believe he could do anything after the commander-in-chief had had warning that an attempt would be made.

"It is fair in you to give the commander-in-chief warning before beginning operations," said Bob.

"Oh, yas; I'm er fa'r man, I am."

Bob eyed the man keenly and searchingly. The fellow's plan for ending the war by killing General Washington was so ridiculous that the youth suspected the hunter was not in his right mind, but he seemed to be; it looked as though his idea was merely the result of ignorance. He had jumped to the conclusion that by killing the commander-in-chief of the patriot army he could put an end to the war, and doubtless any amount of argument would not have convinced him that he was wrong.

Bob did not care to argue, for he was willing the man should think as he did, so long as he was going to give General Washington warning first.

"That insures my being set free, and that is quite an item, from my standpoint," the youth told himself; "so far as the rest is concerned, General Washington will be able to take care of himself. If necessary, we can come here and capture this Tory and take him to the encampment and hold him a prisoner."

The man turned to his daughter.

"Em'ly," he said, "ye kin write an' I kain't; git out paper, quill an' ink an' write whut I tell ye ter."

The girl got the writing materials without a word, and when she was ready she looked up at her father and said:

"What shall I write?"

The man told her what to write. It took him a good while, for he had to stop and think frequently, but finally he got through and said to the girl:

"Read whut ye hev writ thar, Em'ly."

"Very well, father." Then the girl read as follows:

"General George Washington :

"You are hereby warned to resign your position as commander-in-chief of the rebel army, and thus end the war. If you resign, you will live; if you refuse to resign, then you will die. Be warned, for I mean just what I say."

"Signed,

DONALD DUNTON."

The girl had a very good education and had written the message in much better form than it had been given to her.

"Thet'll do first rate," the man said, nodding his head approvingly; "thet gives Gin'ral Washington fa'r warnin', an' then ef he don' take et, et'll be his own fault."

"So it will," agreed Bob.

"D'ye think he'll resign?" the man asked.

Bob knew that there was not any danger that Washington would resign, but he did not want to say so, for fear the man might decide not to send any message, so he said, pretending to think the matter over:

"It is impossible to say. I don't really think he will, but he may decide to do so."

"He'd better!" declared Dunton.

Bob could hardly keep from smiling, but managed to do so.

"You are about the biggest fool I have ever run across," the Liberty Boy said to himself. "Well, it is lucky for me that he is foolish enough to think a warning may have some effect, for otherwise he might hold me here a prisoner."

Dunton took the paper from his daughter's hand, folded it up and placed it in Bob's pocket. Then he took Bob's weapons away from him.

"Don't do that," said Bob.

"I'm erfeerd ye mought hang aroun' an' try ter git er shot at me ef I let you keep yer weepins," was the reply.

"I will give you my word that I won't do so."

The Tory shook his head.

"Promusses hain't much good," he said.

"I would keep mine."

"Mebby so; I won't resk et."

Then he untied Bob's bonds and told the girl to open the door.

"Be shore an' deliver ther message," he said.

"Oh, I'll deliver it," was the reply.

"Good; see that ye do."

Bob stepped through the doorway, out into the darkness

and, obedient to her father's order, the girl closed the door and barred it.

Just as the door went shut Bob heard a "Hist!" and he recognized the warning sound as having been made by Dick. There could be no mistake; he was so familiar with Dick's voice as to make a mistake impossible.

"Hello, is that you, Dick?" he called out, cautiously.

"Yes; what brought you here, Bob?"

Bob stepped to where he could see the dark outlines of his friend's form and said:

"A big Tory brought me here, old man."

"What do you mean?"

They were whispering now, and Bob quickly explained, telling Dick the story as briefly as possible.

"So the owner of this cabin is a Tory, and he is going to bring the war to a close by forcing General Washington to resign or by killing him if he refuses to resign, eh?" he remarked.

"That's it, Dick."

"He must be crazy."

"No; simply ignorant, Dick. He doesn't know any better."

"Well, that does not make him any the less dangerous."

"No, indeed; I fancy he is a dangerous man, so far as that is concerned."

"Then I think it would be best for us not to let him run at large; what do you think?"

"I think the same; are you in for capturing him?"

"Yes."

"All right; but we will have a hard task doing it, I feel confident."

"No matter; the two of us will be too many for him, no matter how bad a man he may be."

"I am unarmed, Dick; so you will have to look out for him and attend to the work that has to be done with weapons."

"Did he take your weapons away from you?"

"Yes."

"Well, we'll soon have them back again."

"I hope so—and the Tory with them."

"We will get him, never fear."

They moved to the door and pushed against it. It did not give, for the girl had barred it.

Then Dick knocked on the door.

There was the sound of footsteps and then a voice—evidently that of the girl—asked:

"Who is there?"

"A traveler," replied Dick, loudly. "I have lost my way and would like to be directed aright or to be permitted to stay over night."

There was a rattling sound as the bar was removed.

Then the door opened slowly and the girl stood there looking eagerly and curiously out.

Bob had stepped back so as to be out of sight in case Donald Dunton was at the door, and when the girl's eyes fell upon Dick's face she looked surprised and a bit disappointed, the youth fancied.

Dick pushed the girl to one side gently and stepped across the threshold into the cabin, Bob appearing suddenly and following him.

At sight of Bob the girl gave utterance to an exclamation, and he nodded at her and smiled.

"I'm back again," he said.

Then he and Dick gazed around the interior of the cabin in some astonishment. They noted that there was no other door and only the one window—the one in front—yet there was no one save the girl in the room when they entered.

The man had been there five minutes before; where was he now?

The youths looked at each other blankly and then at the girl.

CHAPTER IV.

EMILY AIDS THE YOUTHS

"Where is your father, Miss Emily?" asked Bob. He had heard the man call her "Em'ly," so judged that her name was Emily.

The girl flushed and looked worried.

"Surely you do not expect me to tell you where he is?" she said.

"Not if you don't want to," replied Bob. "But I don't see where he can have gone so quickly. He was in here when I came out, and that has been only a few minutes ago."

Dick looked keenly and searchingly around the room.

"It would seem that he could have left the room only by way of the same door you came out of, Bob," he said; "but we know he didn't do that."

Bob looked at the floor.

"Perhaps there is a trapdoor leading to a cellar," he suggested.

"Hardly," said Dick; "it is more likely that he went out through the roof."

Bob looked up at the roof, which was made of rough clapboards.

"You are right, Dick," he said; "he might have gone out that way."

The girl said nothing, but she looked at the youths with an air of interest.

"Ye hed better go an' deliver ther message that I giv' ye, young feller," suddenly said a voice. It had a sepulchral sound and it was impossible to tell in which direction it sounded.

The youths started and looked at each other.

"He is somewhere near at hand," said Bob.

"Just as I thought," from Dick.

"Let's hunt him out."

"All right; we'll try, at any rate."

They began searching the interior of the cabin.

They looked at the floor carefully and then examined the roof.

They spent half an hour at this and were compelled to give up. They could find no trapdoor, and neither was there any loose clapboard that they could discover.

The girl had stood near by watching the two, but had not said anything.

"I guess we will have to give it up, Dick," said Bob, finally.

"I guess so, Bob."

"Air ye through?" said the sepulchral voice at this juncture.

"Yes," replied Dick; "we are through for the present."

"All right; I've let ye look, 'cause I knowed ye couldn't fin' me; but I hev made up my min' ter kill one uv ye afore ye levee ther cabin. I c'u'd hev shot eether one uv ye down at enny time sense ye hev be'n in heer, an' now I'm goin' ter shoot one uv ye an' let ther other one take ther message ter Gin'r'l Washington."

Now the girl suddenly awoke to action.

A little cry of dismay and horror escaped her lips.

She leaped to where the candle stood, on a rough table at one side of the room, and blew the light out.

As she did so there came the sound of a pistol shot, followed instantly by a wild yell of pain and rage commingled, seemingly.

"Are you hurt, Dick?" cried Bob.

"No; it is the other fellow who is hurt, Bob," was the calm reply.

"What! Was it you that fired?"

"Yes, and I must have hit somebody, judging by the yell we heard."

"Did you see him?" eagerly.

"No, but I saw where he was concealed."

"Ah!"

"Oh, sirs, you had better go!" cried the girl; "father has a number of men under his command, who will be here in a few moments, and then you will be unable to escape."

"Thank you, miss," said Dick. "I think it likely that it will be best for us to get away from here, Bob; so come along."

"Stay whar ye air!" cried a fierce voice, sounding from the direction of the doorway behind them. "Ef ye try fur ter git erway, et'll be ther las' thing ye'll do. One uv ye I am goin' ter let go, ez I hev alredyy said, but ther other hez gotter die!"

Dick seized Bob by the arm.

"Come along," he whispered; "tiptoe and don't make any noise if you can help it."

Bob wonderingly accompanied Dick across the room, and when they reached the wall at the end of the room Bob heard Dick feeling around.

"Light ther candle, Em'ly," ordered the owner of the voice; "then we will be able ter see ther rebels, an' will put an end ter one uv 'em mighty quick!"

The tone was fierce, and there could be little doubt that he meant what he said.

Suddenly Dick pulled Bob, and that youth, feeling his way as he went, found that he was going through an open-

ing like a doorway, only not more than half so wide. The opening was in the wall at the end of the room.

Bob realized the truth now; there was a secret door, which was a part of the wall, and Dick had found it.

As soon as both were through Dick pulled the door shut; then he began searching for the one that would let them out into the open air—for he was sure there was one, else the owner of the cabin could not have appeared at the front door so quickly.

The youth experienced trouble in finding the door, however.

He could not find what he was looking for, and while he was busily engaged, feeling everywhere, he heard an exclamation from the interior of the cabin. The voice had a sepulchral sound, but the two understood what was said.

"Blazes, but ther rebels air gone!"

This was the exclamation, and it proved that the girl had lighted the candle, thus making it evident that the two had disappeared.

Then followed another exclamation:

"They hev gone inter ther sekret room!"

Then followed hurried footsteps and there was the sound of a door squeaking, this being caused by it being jerked open so quickly; it had not made any noise when Dick opened it.

A column of light shot across the little compartment through the secret doorway, and Dick drew a pistol and leveled it, at the same time calling out, sternly:

"If you stick your head through that opening I will put a bullet through it!"

A growl was the reply.

"Bob, look for the door that opens to the outer air," whispered Dick; "I'll hold that fellow at bay."

Bob began a search for the door and presently found it. After a trial or two he opened it.

"I've found it, Dick," he whispered.

"All right; go on out and I will follow."

At this instant the sound of voices was heard. The owners of the voices were close at hand, and there were several of them.

"Those are the friends of Donald Dunton the girl spoke of," thought Bob; then he quickly pushed the door to.

At the same moment the two heard the voice of the Tory call out:

"Watch the outside sekret door, boys; I've got er couple uv rebels trapped in thar!"

The Tory's voice sounded so faint that the youths were sure its owner had stepped out of doors and they quickly stepped to the doorway looking into the cabin, and a glance showed them that only the girl was there. She was pale and frightened-looking, and it was evident that she feared the two patriot youths would be roughly handled.

Dick and Bob stepped quickly out into the room and Dick pulled the door to. Then they tiptoed across the room and took up a position behind the door, which was open.

Scarcely had they done this when Donald Dunton hastily entered the cabin.

"Now we'll git ther blasted rebels," he said; "so they've shut ther door, hey?" with a glance in that direction. "Waal, they hev shet themselves up in er trap, that's all. We'll git 'em now, shore."

In his hand was a pistol and he walked across and took hold of the door.

The girl walked across and stood beside her father. She engaged him in conversation and thus delayed the opening of the secret door and at the same time she kept his attention on the door. And while she was doing this Dick and Bob slipped out from behind the door, stepped silently and cautiously out of doors and stole away.

Donald Dunton was blissfully unconscious of the fact that his intended prey had escaped, and he was confident that the two rebels would soon be in his power. One he would kill, the other he would send away with the message to the commander-in-chief of the rebel army.

Presently, when she saw that the two youths had succeeded in getting safely away, the girl ceased talking to her father and he was free to open the secret door.

He did so, and, keeping well back so that a bullet could not hit him, he called out:

"Come outer thar!"

There was no reply, of course.

Dunton simply thought the two had become sulky and would not answer, so he waited a few moments and again called out:

"Come outer thar, d'ye heer?"

Still there was no reply.

"I guess them rebels hev suddintly become deaf an' dumb," the Tory muttered.

He waited a few moments longer and then said:

"Thar hain't no use fur ye two fellers ter be stubborn; we hev got ye, an' ye mought ez well giv' up furst ez las,' so come out an' surrender."

Still there was silence and the Tory became angry.

"Say, ye blamed fools," he cried; "whut good is et goin' ter do ye ter stay in thar an' keep still? Ye kain't git er-way, fur I hev six men outside, an' they'd shoot ye full uv holes ef ye tried et."

There was no reply to this, of course, and at last the man became suspicious.

"I wunder ef they hev got outer theer?" he exclaimed; "but uv course they hain't; they couldn't hev done et; ther boys would hev seen 'em."

He stood there hesitating, and presently poked his head through the narrow doorway. He did it as quickly as possible, for he was afraid he might get a bullet through it. His intention had been to jerk his head back just as quickly, but the glance showed him that the secret room was empty, and he kept his head through the doorway, staring in open-mouthed amazement.

"Waal, ef that don' beat ther Dutch!" he finally exclaimed, in a tone of disappointment and disgust.

"What is the matter, father?" asked the girl, innocently.

"Them blamed rebels hev got erway!"

"You don't mean it?"

"Yas I do; they're gone."

The girl looked into the secret room.

"You are right," she said. "I wonder how they got out without the men seeing them?"

"I dunno," in a tone of disgust; "they air slippery young rebels, an' thet's er fact."

Then he went to the doorway and called to his men. They quickly appeared, and when he told them they had let the two rebels slip past them and escape, they denied it. They said nobody had come out of the secret door, but Dunton laughed at them and said they were mistaken.

"Let et go, though," he said; "et won't do no good quarrelin' erbout et. Ther rebels hev got erway, so we mought ez well go erbout ther work we hev laid out fur ternight."

A few minutes later they took their departure, and when they were gone the girl heaved a sigh of relief and said, half aloud:

"I'm glad the two handsome young patriots escaped."

CHAPTER V.

EMILY IN DANGER.

Dick and Bob were well pleased over having made their escape from the Tories.

"That was rather a close call for us, Dick," said Bob.

"Yes, Bob, and we would not have escaped had it not been that the girl favored us."

"You are right. Say, she is a fine girl, isn't she?"

"Yes, she is altogether too fine a girl to have such a rascal for a father."

"That's the way it seems to me."

The youths concealed themselves near by and overheard the conversation between Dunton and his men; then they departed.

They walked onward, talking of the affair, and they were careful to keep the location of the cabin in mind, for they thought it likely they would want to go back there again to capture Donald Dunton and some of the members of his band, if possible to do so.

"I suppose they make a business of going around and robbing the patriots of the vicinity," said Bob.

"Likely that is what they do."

At last they arrived at the point where the Liberty Boys were encamped. Some of the youths were asleep, but the majority were still up awaiting the return of Dick. They were anxious regarding Bob, and hoped to see him with Dick when the latter should return.

Their hopes were realized, and when they saw Bob was with Dick they gave utterance to exclamations of delight.

They shook hands with Bob and asked where he had been and what he had been doing.

Bob explained as briefly as possible, and the Liberty Boys

gave utterance to exclamations of combined surprise and anger when they learned of their comrade's capture by the Tory, Donald Dunton.

"Let's go and lie in wait near his cabin," said one; "and then, when he comes back, we can capture him."

"I was thinking of that," said Dick; "but a half dozen of us will be sufficient for that work; the rest must do a bit more sharpshooting before morning."

The youths were more than willing to make another attempt at sharpshooting that night. They were eager to do so, and Dick was willing that the attempt should be made.

He selected five youths, and told them they would go with Bob to lie in wait near the Dunton cabin for the purpose of capturing the Tory when he came home.

It suited Bob very well, that he should be the one to return to the cabin, for he wanted to capture the man who had captured him, and a few minutes later he and his five comrades took their departure.

Half an hour later the Liberty Boys, under Dick's leadership, started toward the British encampment, intent on doing some work in the sharpshooting line.

They stole along, when they had arrived at a point near the encampment, and moved as cautiously and silently as so many shadows.

If they could succeed in picking off some more of the redcoats it would be a feather in their cap, for the British would certainly be on their guard this time more than they had been in the first instance.

The youths separated, as they had done before, and completely surrounded the encampment.

They had all the rest of the night for the work, so moved very slowly and cautiously.

By so doing they succeeded in getting within musket-shot distance of the edge of the encampment, and they selected their targets and took careful aim; then they waited for the signal to fire.

At last it came.

The signal was a shrill whistle from Dick's lips and the instant it was heard the youths pulled trigger.

There was a crashing roar, and then on the night air rose shrieks, groans and yells.

Pandemonium reigned.

The encampment was at once thrown into a terrible uproar.

The previous experience enabled the British to understand what had happened better than had been the case the first time, and at once hundreds of the redcoats seized their muskets and made a dash for the timber, out of which had come the terrible volley.

As they ran they fired, hoping to bring down some of the enemy, but instead they killed two of their own sentinels.

The Liberty Boys ran like deer. They seemed to be able to see in the dark for they managed to avoid running against the trees while the redcoats bumped against trees almost at every step.

The Liberty Boys returned to the place where they had

made their camp for the night and again the roll was called. Not one was missing—with the exception of the six who had gone to try to capture Dunton, the Tory—but several were wounded.

"How many did we kill, do you think, Dick?" asked one of the youths.

"I should say about fifty," was the reply.

"And we wounded quite a number, too, no doubt."

"Oh, no doubt regarding that."

The Liberty Boys were in a sheltered nook, where they would not be likely to be discovered by the British. No campfires were burning, so there was nothing to guide the enemy should the redcoats take a notion to try to hunt the sharpshooters down.

Dick had a double line of sentinels stationed, and so, feeling secure, the youths lay down and went to sleep.

Bob, accompanied by his five comrades, did not have much difficulty in finding his way back to the Tory's cabin.

There was no light in the window, so the youths decided that the girl had gone to bed.

"We will camp down here close to the house," whispered Bob, "and when Dunton comes we will leap upon him and make a prisoner of him."

The youths sat down and made themselves as comfortable as possible, for they did not know how long they might have to remain there.

For all they knew, Dunton might remain away all night; but no matter; they would stay till he came.

The youths had been there nearly an hour, when they heard the crash of firearms. It was the musket volley that had been fired by the Liberty Boys.

"I guess the boys have got in some more good work," said Bob, in a cautious voice.

"I shouldn't wonder," replied one.

"I hope so, anyway," from another.

The youths listened and quickly heard the sound of scattered firing.

"Those are the redcoats' muskets that are talking now," said Bob.

"Yes," from one of the other youths; "I hope they won't talk to any effect."

All said the same.

Presently the firing ceased and all was quiet for more than half an hour.

Then suddenly the youths heard voices.

Somebody was coming—several persons, in fact.

Bob wondered if they were Dunton and his comrades.

Somehow he doubted it, for the voices sounded in the direction of the British encampment. He thought it much more likely that the owners of the voices were British soldiers.

The youths rose and stepped back a ways, so as to avoid being discovered by the newcomers.

Presently four dark forms passed near where the youths were concealed, and then exclamations escaped the lips of the newcomers.

"'Ello, 'ere's a cabin!" was what one said, and the youths knew that the fellow who spoke was a redcoat.

"Wonder who lives 'ere?" said another.

"Don't know; but we can find out, don't you know?"

"So we can."

They advanced to the door and knocked on it.

There was no sound from within. Evidently the girl thought it would be safer to keep quiet, in the hope that the men might go away.

Again the redcoats knocked.

"'Ello! 'Ello, hin there!" called out one; "hopen the door at once."

Still there was no sound from within the cabin.

The redcoats became impatient.

They knocked again, louder than before.

Still there came no reply from within—no sound to indicate that the cabin was occupied.

"Let's kick the door down," suggested one.

"Hall right; that's the thing to do, by jove," from another.

Then they kicked on the door and tried to break it down, but it was too strong for them and resisted the attack successfully.

This made the redcoats angrier than ever.

"There must be someone at 'ome," said one; "and we'll 'ave 'im out of that pretty soon or know the reason why."

Again they tried the effect of kicks on the door, but found this unavailing, and they were very angry, indeed.

"Hi'll tell you what let's do," said one.

"What?" from another.

"Let's fire the blawsted cabin."

"Fire it!" in a chorus.

"Yes; what's the difference? Likely it is the 'ome of a blawsted rebel, any'ow, and by firing it we will get the owner to show 'imself."

This suggestion evidently met with the approval of the others, for soon the sound of flint striking against steel was heard and presently a tiny blaze was seen. This speedily grew, being fed with leaves and twigs, and within ten minutes after the fire was started it was blazing up and getting good headway on the cabin proper.

Bob hardly knew what to do.

He was certain that the girl, Emily Dunton, was in the cabin, and he feared she might be burned to death.

Then he thought of the secret room, and that it would be possible for the girl to escape in this direction, if she thought of it, and he was sure she would do so.

Just then he saw a door at the end of the building—or, rather, it looked like a section of the wall itself—open, and the girl was revealed to the eyes of the Liberty Boys. The light of the fire at the side of the cabin made it light enough for this.

The girl hesitated, looked fearfully out, and then stepped through the opening out into the open air.

As she did so one of the redcoats, who had strolled to the corner of the cabin, caught sight of her.

"Ere is somebody, boys!" he cried; "'ere's just the prettiest girl you ever saw."

As he spoke he leaped forward and seized the girl's arm. "Help! Help!" she cried, struggling to get free.

CHAPTER VI.

MORE SHARPSHOOTING.

"Help is at hand!" cried Bob Estabrook, and he and his five comrades bounded forward and attacked the four red-coats.

They took the British by surprise, and so had a big advantage.

They outnumbered the redcoats, as well, and so the affair was quickly ended, the four being knocked down and held in spite of their struggles very quickly.

The Liberty Boys bound the arms of the British soldiers with their belts.

Then they made the four sit down, and while one stood over them, pistols in hands, the others went and extinguished the fire, thus saving the cabin.

"Oh, thank you! thank you!" cried the girl, addressing Bob. "You have rendered me a double favor, for you have saved me from those men," with a glance at the redcoats, dimly visible in the faint light of the dying embers from the fire; "and you have saved my home from being burned."

"You are welcome to all we have done," said Bob. And then in a whisper he added:

"I am no more than even with you for what you did for myself and comrade this evening, when you permitted us to escape when your father was trying to capture us."

"You were more than welcome to what little I did," the girl said.

After some further conversation Bob suggested that the girl go back in the house and go to bed.

"You will not be bothered any more tonight, I am confident," he said. "At any rate, we will see to it that these fellows don't bother you."

"Thank you," said the girl, and then she bade Bob and his five comrades goodnight and went into the cabin by way of the secret door in the end.

"Say, that's the sweetest, prettiest girl I ever saw in my life!" said one of the Liberty Boys when the girl was gone.

This was a young soldier, nineteen years old; his name was Dan Morton, and he was a brave, noble-hearted fellow and well liked by all his comrades.

"I guess Dan is in love with the girl," said Sam Sanderson.

"You are right, Sam; I am!" was the reply, "and I am going to try to win her, too, if I have to desert in order to remain in this part of the country!"

"You won't have to desert, I think," said Bob; "the British are going to enter Philadelphia sooner or later and will probably remain there all winter, and if they do we will remain near the city all winter and you will have plenty of chances to come here and press your suit."

"E shan't 'ave it all 'is own way," said one of the red-

coats. "I 'ave taken a liking to the girl myself, and I am going to henter the race with you, young fellow."

"You'll have to get away from the patriots first," said Dan; "but even if you were free I wouldn't be afraid of you cutting me out, for you haven't made a very favorable impression. I believe you are the fellow who grabbed hold of her, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am; and I will win 'er haway from you, blast your blooming heyes!"

"All right; you are welcome to do so, if you can!" said Dan.

And Emily Dunton, standing with her ear to the crack made by leaving the secret door slightly ajar, nodded her head and said to herself:

"Yes, you are welcome to win me away from that handsome young man, Mr. Redcoat—if you can!"

The fact was that Emily had seen the youth looking at her with deep admiration in his eyes, and, girl-like, she was pleased, and took a covert, but good look at the young man. She was very favorably impressed with him, and when she heard him declare to his comrades his intention of winning her, even though he had to desert to do it, her heart beat more rapidly and a happy feeling came over her.

"I believe I might learn to love him!" she said to herself. "Yes, I am sure I may! Oh, I hope he will come and see me; he will find that it won't be a difficult matter, but I will be careful and not let him advance too easily, for that might cheapen me in his estimation. I will keep him in suspense awhile, anyhow."

Then the Liberty Boys began talking in whispers, and, being unable to understand what was said, Emily closed the door and went into the main room and lay down—but not to sleep. She could not sleep for thinking of the handsome Liberty Boy who had declared his intention of winning her.

"Say," said one of the prisoners, "'ow long are you fellows going to stay 'ere?"

"Till we get ready to go away," replied Bob.

"Well, when will that be?"

"I don't know; don't ask so many questions."

"Hall right; I just wanted to know, so that I might go to sleep if we hare to stay 'ere all night."

"Go to sleep if you like; I don't think we will remain here all night, though."

"What are you waiting for?"

"That is none of your business."

"Say, let's stuff a gag into that chap's mouth," suggested Sam Sanderson; "he seems to be determined to keep on talking."

"I'll be still, hif you won't do that," the redcoat said.

"All right," said Bob; "stick to that, for if you don't we will gag you."

The redcoat subsided. He did not wish to be gagged, and he realized that the speaker meant what he said.

The Liberty Boys then settled down to await the coming of Donald Dunton and his men.

They waited patiently hour after hour and still the Tories did not put in an appearance.

They made themselves as comfortable as possible and waited till the light from the rising sun began to gild the eastern horizon, and still the owner of the cabin did not come.

The Liberty Boys had dozed by spells and the redcoat prisoners were sleeping uneasily, and Bob decided that it would be best to go. He was afraid that Dick might have some plans afoot for the Liberty Boys, and that if he and his comrades remained longer away it might interfere with Dick's plans.

"I guess we had better go," said Bob, and the youths got up, woke the redcoats and soon were making their way through the timber in the direction of the point where the Liberty Boys were encamped for the night.

When the six arrived there with their prisoners they found the Liberty Boys up, eating breakfast.

Dick hastened to meet the youths.

"Hello, Bob, who have you there?" he cried, when he came near.

"Some redcoats, Dick."

"So I see; where did you get them?"

Bob explained as briefly as possible.

"And you didn't capture Donald Dunton, after all," he remarked, in a disappointed voice.

"No, he didn't come home."

"Well, you did not come back empty-handed, anyway, and that is something."

"So it is; we have something to show for our night's work; and how was it with you?"

"Oh, we did some good work; I think we must have killed at least fifty and wounded a goodly number."

"That is good."

"So you hate the fellows that did that work last night, eh?" said one of the redcoats.

"Yes, we are one of the fellows who did it," said Dick; "and we are going to do a lot more of it, too, before we get through with it."

"You will soon get to the end of your rope, I am thinking."

"You are welcome to think so, if it will please you; but I think you are mistaken."

Dick and Bob went off to one side and held a council. They decided that it would be best to go to the patriot encampment, turn the four prisoners over to General Washington, give him the message from Donald Dunton and then get back and get to work at the sharpshooting.

So they broke camp and marched to where the main army was encamped.

They turned the prisoners over to some of the soldiers to guard, and then Dick and Bob went and reported to General Washington.

He was glad that they had been so successful in sharpshooting, and was glad, also, that they had brought the four prisoners; but when Bob gave him the message from Dunton, the Tory, and he had read it, the commander-in-chief laughed aloud.

"This is about the most humorous thing I have ever

heard of," he said. "I shall keep this message as a curiosity."

"I thought you would laugh at it, your excellency," said Bob; "but I deemed it my duty to deliver it, nevertheless."

"Of course; you did the right thing in doing so."

Then he praised the youths for the splendid sharpshooting they had done.

"If you can keep that up," he said, "it will have considerable effect in holding the British in check."

"We will do our best, sir," said Dick.

"Very well; that is all anybody can do. I know, however, that that means that good work will be done."

After some further talk the youths saluted and withdrew, and half an hour later they were heading toward the point where the British had been encamped during the night.

They moved slowly and cautiously, for they did not know where the British were; they might have broken camp and moved forward, in which case they might be encountered at any moment.

Presently Dick called a halt, and then he started forward to reconnoiter.

He moved slowly and cautiously, for he knew the enemy was likely to be encountered at any time.

He had not gone far when he caught sight of the brilliant scarlet uniforms of the British through between the trees. The enemy was coming!

Dick hastened back and told the Liberty Boys to get ready to do some sharpshooting.

"The redcoats are coming," he said; "they will be in sight in a few minutes."

The youths scattered and took refuge behind trees, and got ready to fire when the time should come.

Then they waited eagerly, for they wanted to give the enemy a surprise.

Presently the advance guard of the British army put in an appearance, but it was yet too far away to fire upon.

Closer and closer it came, and at last it was within range. Dick saw that the youths were all ready for work and he gave the signal to fire.

The youths did so at once.

Crash! Roar!

Loudly the volley rang out and down went at least fifty of the British.

CHAPTER VII.

A TORY'S MISTAKE.

Instantly all was confusion in the enemy's ranks.

The redcoats had not been expecting anything of the kind.

They were not thinking of such a thing as that they might be ambushed.

Shrieks and groans went up from those who were wounded.

Yells of rage escaped from the others.

They then fired a volley in the direction of the Liberty Boys, after which they rushed forward, intent on obtaining revenge for the death of their comrades.

But the sharpshooters were too smart for the redcoats.

They retreated rapidly and moved diagonally away, which soon took them out of danger.

The British were very angry, but the affair caused them to be more cautious.

They sent out scouts to beat up the bushes and make sure there was no force of rebels lying in wait for them.

The youths were busy all that day, and in spite of the caution of the British, managed to pick off a number of the enemy.

The main army of the patriots made a show of offering battle, also, and this had a tendency to check the British, who, although they claimed to have won a great victory at the Brandywine, were not eager to enter into another battle.

Day after day this work was kept up, and the Liberty Boys did splendid work as sharpshooters. They picked off the British a few at a time, and were a veritable thorn in the enemy's flesh.

The main army, under General Washington, did good work also, and for nearly two weeks the British were held in check and could progress but slowly. They finally reached the vicinity of Philadelphia, however, and the commander-in-chief of the patriot army decided that it was useless to bother with the enemy any longer; so he ordered that his army should draw away to the westward of the city, and this was done.

This left the way clear for the British, and they marched into Philadelphia in triumph.

Their bands were playing and the soldiers were dressed in their finest uniforms. They made a brave showing, true, but they had nothing to boast of, for a smaller body of ragged soldiers had held them back and forced them to be nearly two weeks in coming about twenty-five miles.

The patriots went into temporary camp over by the Schuylkill river, for Washington wished to hold a council before deciding upon his course.

As soon as they had gone into camp Dick Slater went to General Washington and asked permission to go to Philadelphia and keep watch of the enemy.

"It will be dangerous to do that, will it not?" the commander-in-chief asked.

"I don't think it will be very dangerous," was the reply.

"Well, if you go you had better take at least one companion along."

"Very well; I will take Bob Estabrook."

Dick withdrew and hastened to tell Bob to get ready.

"We are going into the city," he said.

"Hurrah!" cried Bob; "that is just what I want to do."

"All right; are you ready now?"

"Yes. But how are we going, afoot?"

"Yes; we don't want to run the risk of losing our horses."

"All right; I can walk it; it isn't very far."

"No, we have walked farther many a time."

They set out and made their way in the direction of Philadelphia.

They did not take their muskets, and their pistols were hidden beneath the skirts of their coats.

They were dressed in rough, homespun clothing, such as was worn by farmers of that vicinity, and did not think there would be much danger in walking boldly into the city.

This was what they intended to do, anyway, but when they had gone about a mile they were overtaken by a farmer in a wagon. He asked them if they were going to the city, and they said they were. He asked them to ride and they accepted eagerly, for they felt that this would enable them to enter the city unchallenged, as the sentinels, if any were placed out by the British, would think they were the farmer's sons, doubtless.

"I wonder if there is any truth in what I heard this morning?" the farmer said, looking at Dick.

"What did you hear?" asked the youth.

"I heard that the British have entered Philadelphia."

"So did we hear so," said Dick, "and that is the reason we are going to the city. We want to see the British army."

"Are you king's men?"

"Well, we aren't men yet, and don't exactly know whether we are for the king or not," said Dick; "we are what you might call neutral. Which side are you on?"

"Oh, I'm for the king."

"Well, that's all right, I guess."

"I think so."

They talked of the British army, and then presently the farmer asked them where they lived.

They said they lived several miles down the river, and he appeared to be satisfied.

At last they reached the edge of the city and there were no sentinels to be found. The British evidently thought they were in no danger, as the patriot army had withdrawn and disappeared.

On the wagon rolled, and at last they were right in the heart of the city.

Dick and Bob thanked the man for the ride and leaped out and mingled with the people thronging the streets.

It seemed to be a great day in Philadelphia.

Everything had a holiday appearance.

Flags were flying from the business houses and dwellings, and the people were waving their handkerchiefs and hats as the British soldiers marched along the street.

The majority of the people who were left in the city were Tories, for many of the patriots had fled as soon as they learned that the British were coming.

"Pretty sight, isn't it, eh?" remarked a man who had stopped near Dick and Bob.

He spoke directly to Dick and made a gesture toward the British soldiers.

"Oh, yes, pretty enough," was Dick's reply.

"I think this is the beginning of the end," the man went

on. "The king's soldiers have possession of the rebel capital, and I feel that the end is not far distant."

Dick made no reply, though it was hard to keep from telling the fellow what he thought about it.

The failure to answer made the man suspicious. He stepped up closer to Dick and said:

"Didn't you hear what I said just now?"

"Yes, I heard it," was the calm reply.

"Why didn't you answer then?"

"I didn't think what you said required an answer."

"Oh, you didn't?"

"No; you made it more as a statement of fact than anything else."

"And it was a statement of fact, wasn't it?"

"Doubtless."

The man looked keenly and suspiciously at the youths. "I believe you two youngsters are rebels!" he said.

"Do you?" from Bob.

"Yes, I do."

"Well, you have a right to believe anything you like, I suppose; but you must remember that your believing a thing doesn't make it so."

"No, but I am sure that it is so."

"You have no right to say that. We are standing here looking at the soldiers march past, and we are, so far as you can know to the contrary, admiring them just as much as you are."

"Then you are king's men, after all?"

Dick half turned and looked the man straight in the eyes.

"I deny your right to ask us any questions," he said. "It is no business of yours whether we are king's men or not."

"That is a matter on which different persons may have different opinions. I am a king's man, the king's soldiers have taken possession of the city, and I think that every adherent of the king has a right to question anyone regarding his politics, especially if he has suspicions that the person or persons in question are not king's men."

"Well, I deny your right to question us," said Dick; "so just attend to your own business, please, and let us alone."

The man's face flushed with anger. It was evident that he was one of those important, impudent men who imagine they have a right to command, and he glared at Dick fiercely and cried:

"Don't you dare talk saucy to me, you young rascal!"

"Don't you dare talk saucy to me, either, you old rascal!" retorted Dick.

"What's that! You dare call me an old rascal!"

Dick faced the man and said promptly and firmly:

"Yes; you called me a young rascal, didn't you?"

"I did, but—that is different."

"Oh, no; there is no difference. I have just as much right to call you a rascal as you have to call me one."

"But I'm a man and you're only a boy. You should have more respect for me than that."

"I don't see why we should show you any respect. You started this affair by speaking to us regarding the British

soldiers, and then you began questioning us as to whether we were king's men or not."

"Well, I maintain that I had a right to question you."

"And I maintain that you had no such right."

"Then you think I was impudent, I suppose?" sneeringly.

The answer came promptly:

"I do!"

The man glared.

"Well," he said, presently; "what are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing," was the calm reply; "I feel that I am even with you. You called me a young rascal and I called you an old one."

"Oh, yes, so you did," in a threatening voice; "and you will retract those words, young fellow, or——"

"Or what?"

"You will wish you had!"

Dick smiled and then said to Bob:

"He seems to be getting worked up somewhat, Bob."

"Yes," replied that youth, with a grin; "he seems to be getting a bit angry."

"Are you going to retract what you said about me?" the man cried.

"If you will retract what you said about me," coolly.

"I will retract nothing!"

"Then neither will I."

The man reached out quickly and seized Dick by the coat collar and began shaking him.

"I'll shake you out of your shoes, you young rascal!" he exclaimed.

"And this is what I will do with you, you old rascal," said Dick.

Then he jerked loose from the man, seized him in a grip of iron, and, lifting him high in the air, with a display of strength that made the spectators stare, threw him over the heads of those standing in front.

The man fell flat on his back on the hard street and almost at the feet of the marching soldiers.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SAFE REFUGE.

This created a sensation among the people who were near enough to see what had taken place.

They stared at Dick in amazement.

They saw he was only a young fellow, and they could not understand how he could be possessed of such wonderful strength.

They would not have believed him capable of doing what he had done had they not seen it themselves.

As for the Tory who had been handled so roughly, he lay where he had fallen for a few moments; the fact was that he was partly stunned by the shock of the fall.

For the space of fifteen seconds, at least, he could not move or speak, and then he regained the use of his faculties and hastily scrambled to his feet.

He now proved himself to be possessed of considerable shrewdness, however; he had felt the grip of the youth and realized that in a personal encounter he would not stand much chance. So, instead of trying to get at Dick, he pointed at the youth and cried out:

"That is a rebel, men! Seize him! Don't let him get away!"

"He is a liar, men," called out Dick. "I am no more a rebel than he is."

The crowd was puzzled. It did not know which to believe.

"Seize him, I say!" almost shouted the Tory; "grab him and that other fellow, too. They are both rebels."

"Why don't you grab us yourself?" asked Bob, sarcastically, and a number of the spectators laughed.

"Yes, if they are rebels, take them prisoners and turn them over to the British," said a man.

"I can't do it alone," was the sullen reply. "Some of you men help me and I will do it."

"That is fair," said a man who had been eyeing Dick and Bob suspiciously. "Let's help him take the two in charge, and if they can prove that they are not rebels, then no harm will be done."

Several men nodded their heads in approval of this statement.

"I'll help!"

"So will I."

"You can count me in."

"You take the lead and we'll be right with you."

Such were a few of the exclamations from men nearby, and Dick and Bob realized that unless they got away from there quickly they would be taken prisoners.

"I guess we had better get away from here, Bob," whispered Dick.

"All right; I'm ready to go."

"Come along, then."

Dick whirled suddenly and bounded away at the top of his speed and Bob was close at his heels.

A great shout went up from the crowd and the marching soldiers craned their necks and looked to see what was going on, but they could not do more, for they had to remain in their places and keep on marching.

"Catch the rebels!"

"Head 'em off!"

"Don't let them get away!"

"Down them, somebody!"

Such were a few of the cries given vent to by the members of the crowd.

Some tried to stop the youths, but suffered as a result, for they were knocked down or hurled aside and the youths dashed onward.

Many started in pursuit of the fugitives, for such is the natural impulse always, though as a rule there are few who will take the responsibility of trying to capture fugi-

tives. Most people simply like to join in the chase and yell, while waiting for somebody else to do the work.

The youths darted down the first side street they came to.

They felt that they would have a better chance to make their escape by so doing.

Quite a crowd continued in pursuit of them, though many stopped when they saw the chase would lead them away from the main street, where the soldiers were marching. They did not want to miss any of this show.

Onward ran the two Liberty Boys.

They did not intend that the Tory citizens should catch them.

They were such good runners that they rapidly pulled away from their pursuers, and at the next corner they turned and ran down the street leading to the left.

They had gone only a few paces when they saw that they had made a mistake; there was a great crush of people half-way down the block, and it would be impossible to get through.

The youths paused and stood, hesitating.

"Which way, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I give it up," was the reply.

The pursuers had not yet come in sight around the corner.

Suddenly Dick leaped up some steps leading to one of the houses, and after him came Bob.

The youth tried the door and found that it was not fastened.

He opened it and stepped through into the hallway beyond.

Bob did the same, and he had just disappeared when the pursuers came around the corner.

Dick closed the door and fastened it, and then he and Bob turned—to find themselves confronted by a tall, handsome but sad-looking woman of middle age. She was undoubtedly the owner of the house and had heard them enter and had come to see who they were and what they wanted. At the first glance Dick got of the woman's face he was struck with the thought that he had seen its owner before somewhere, or at least had seen somebody that looked very much like her. It was the same with Bob, and he cudgled his brain to try to remember where he had seen the person who looked like the woman standing before them.

"Who are you and why have you intruded here?" the woman asked in a sweet, musical voice. Dick and Bob were sure they had heard a voice that sounded like hers somewhere, and not so very long ago, but could not recall where it was that they had heard it.

The youths doffed their hats and bowed politely, and Dick said:

"I am sorry, madam, but we were forced to intrude here or somewhere. We were pursued by a crowd of men who were trying to capture us, and we tried your door quite by chance, and, finding it unfastened, entered. I hope you will overlook our unceremonious way of doing, and with your permission we will go right on through your house and out the back way."

The woman looked at the handsome youths with interest. It was plain that she was favorably impressed.

"Do not be in a hurry, please," she said; "why were the men pursuing you?"

Dick hesitated, and the woman noticing this, said:

"Have no fears to speak out, sir; you may tell the whole truth with perfect safety. I am confident that you are honest, honorable young men; your faces tell me so, and if there is anything I can do to aid you I shall be glad to do it."

"Perhaps not, lady," said Dick. "It may be that you are like the men who were chasing us—possessed of different views regarding the war."

The woman made a gesture of dissent.

"I am only a woman, living here alone with my servants," she said, "and I have no definite views on the matter. I am neither an adherent of the king nor a patriot; whichever side you are on, you will be safe in acknowledging it, and it is my guess that you are patriots."

"Right!" said Dick; "we are patriots, and were being chased by Tories."

"You are safe here. Come into the parlor and be seated. You must not leave my house until you are absolutely sure the coast is clear."

"Thank you, lady; but that will be asking too much of you, I think. It might get you into trouble, for the Tories might learn that you have given us shelter."

The woman shook her head.

"I have no fears," she said. "I do not think they will learn that you entered here."

"Well, since you wish it, we will remain awhile," said Dick.

Then he and Bob entered the parlor and seated themselves.

The woman followed and took a seat where she could see the youths, and it was evident that she was deeply interested in them.

She asked them to tell her who they were and how they came to be in the city when it was in such a turmoil over the coming of the British.

Dick realized that the woman was to be trusted, and so told her who they were and why they were in the city.

"And so you are the famous Dick Slater!" the lady exclaimed, looking at Dick with interest and admiration. "I am glad to know you—and Mr. Estabrook, also. I have heard of him."

"Oh, I haven't done much," smiled Bob, who was not at all jealous of Dick. "I have helped Dick some on various occasions, that is all."

"He is one of the bravest fellows alive, lady," said Dick; "and he is so modest that he always wants to give me all the credit for everything. That is one reason my name has been heard mentioned more often than his."

"Don't believe him, lady," smiled Bob; "he is a truthful fellow, ordinarily, but he will tell a story on occasion."

The woman smiled.

"I understand," she said; "you are both as brave as any-

one can be, and are the greatest friends in the world, and each is willing to give the other all the credit. You would die for each other cheerfully, if it were necessary."

"I guess that is about the truth of the matter," agreed Dick.

The lady told them that her name was Ensley, and that she was a widow, her husband having died ten years ago.

She was evidently well pleased with the two youths; they were so young that she looked upon them as boys, and she found difficulty in understanding how they could have done so much daring work for the cause of liberty.

She questioned them regarding their experiences in the army, and presently asked them regarding their relatives.

The youths told her about their homes, and it did not take the shrewd woman long to learn that in the youths' sisters, whose names were dwelt on tenderly, the two had sweethearts.

"I understand," she said, smiling, "and I am glad, and hope that you will be spared till the end of this cruel war to make those two girls happy."

"Thank you," said Dick.

"I hope we will get through all right," said Bob; "but I'm afraid that if I follow Dick, here, I won't. He is always going into the greatest dangers he can find."

"You must be careful," the woman said, earnestly. "Never permit yourselves to be reckless; remember those two girls up in Westchester county and think of how they would suffer if you were to be killed."

The lady spoke earnestly and feelingly, for, woman-like, she was interested in the youths' love affair.

"We will remember what you have said, Mrs. Ensley," said Dick.

"Yes, indeed," from Bob.

Suddenly an exclamation escaped Dick's lips.

He pointed to an oil painting of a girl seemingly about seventeen or eighteen years of age which hung on the wall opposite where they sat.

"Look, Bob!" he cried, "who would you say sat for that picture?"

Bob looked and exclaimed:

"Emily Dunton!"

CHAPTER IX.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

The woman looked at the youths in amazement.

She glanced at the picture and then back at the Liberty Boys, a wondering, questioning look in her eyes.

Then suddenly she became excited.

"What do you mean, Mr. Slater—Mr. Estabrook?" she exclaimed. "Who is this Emily Dunton you speak of? And does she look like that portrait?"

"Yes, indeed, she does look like that portrait," said Dick; "enough like it so that she might have sat for it."

The woman's eyes shone. She was evidently greatly excited.

"Where did you know her?" she asked. "Is she alive? If so, where does she live?"

"She is alive," said Dick, "and she lives within twenty-five miles of Philadelphia."

"Tell me about her," eagerly.

The youths did so, and it was plain that the story excited the deepest interest. The woman gazed thoughtfully and abstractedly at the floor after the story was ended, and then suddenly she looked up at the youths and said:

"I believe I am to be made the happiest woman in Philadelphia as a result of your coming here today."

Dick and Bob were surprised, and showed it.

"You wonder why?" the woman said, "and I will tell you. More than eighteen years ago I was courted by two men; one, Mr. Ensley, I married; the other went away, breathing threats against us. He swore that we should not be permitted to live in happiness. My husband laughed at the man's threats, saying they amounted to nothing, but I was afraid, and when, four years later, our little daughter, Emily, two years old, disappeared, I at once laid the blame at the door of Horace Dilworth. From that day till this we never heard a word regarding the whereabouts or probable fate of our loved one; but you have come to me today and brought me hope. If the girl in question looks enough like that portrait to have sat for it, it is at least possible that she may be my missing daughter, for I sat for that picture myself at the age of eighteen, and it is probable that my daughter at that age might look much as I did at that time."

"True," agreed Dick; "and this man Dilworth; what kind of looking man was he?"

The woman described him and the youths shook their heads.

"This man Dunton cannot be Dilworth," said Bob; "there is no resemblance between him and the description you give of Dilworth."

"That might be, and still the girl might be my daughter," said the woman, eagerly. "Dilworth might have given the child into this man's charge, not caring to have charge of her himself."

"True," agreed Dick.

"Yes, that is reasonable to suppose," said Bob, "and I must say that when I was with the two in the cabin I could hardly bring myself to believe that the girl was that fellow's daughter."

"I don't believe she is," said the woman, in a tone of conviction; "I believe that she is my daughter, and I must see her. Now, how is this to be brought about? Can you two young gentlemen help me to meet her?"

"We can," said Dick.

"And will?" from Bob.

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" delightedly. "But how will you go about it? How will you manage it?"

"We will go to her home, explain matters to her and get her to come here with us," said Dick.

"But will she be willing to come?" the woman asked.

"I am sure that she will," said Bob.

"But this man who claims to be her father—he may object."

"We will get her to come, anyway," said Dick, "and if the man objects it will do him no good."

Again the woman thanked the youths.

"I really believe that you are the two most noble-hearted young men in all the world!" she declared, enthusiastically.

"Oh, you mustn't give us too much credit," said Dick; "don't forget that we owe you a debt for letting us stay here and thus escape from our enemies, the Tories."

"Oh, that is nothing at all. I am glad to have been in a position where I could do you a favor. You owe me nothing for that."

"We look at it differently," said Dick, "and when we have brought the girl here we shall consider that we have scarcely cancelled the debt we owe you."

"I shall consider myself as being deeply in your debt," said Mrs. Ensley.

They talked awhile longer, the woman asking many eager questions regarding the girl, her looks, etc., and with each answer she received she became more and more confident that there was a probability that the girl was her daughter.

She asked the youths when they would make the attempt to bring the girl to Philadelphia, and they said they would make the attempt soon; just as soon as they could get away from the city and back to the patriot army indeed.

Presently Dick suggested that they go to the door and see if the coast was clear.

"If it is," he said, "we will take our departure and will slip out of the city and away to the patriot encampment, and then tonight we will go get Emily Dunton and bring her to your home."

"Oh, thank you!" Mrs. Ensley said. "I hope and pray that you may be successful!"

They made their way out into the hall and to the front door. This Dick unlocked and opened cautiously.

He looked out, and after taking a careful survey of the street, reported that he believed the coast was clear.

"I don't think that any of the men who were pursuing us are in sight," he said. "They have doubtless given up the search and gone back to look at the soldiers marching up the street."

"Then we may as well be going," said Bob.

They shook hands with Mrs. Ensley and bade her good-by and then stepped through the doorway and out upon the front stoop. As the door closed behind them they walked down the steps and were about to turn down the street, when Bob gave Dick's arm a pull and said, in an excited whisper:

"Look yonder, Dick!"

The youth looked in the direction indicated and gave a start.

A girl was coming toward them, walking slowly and casting timid, frightened glances to first one side and then the other. She was dressed in blue homespun and wore a bon-

net, while coarse shoes were on her feet. She was dressed, indeed, like the farmer maidens of the country surrounding the city. The girl's face was beautiful, however, and as Dick caught sight of it he gave utterance to the exclamation:

"Emily Dunton!"

"You are right!" said Bob; "it is a great piece of luck, but I don't understand how it happens that she is here."

"Neither do I, but we will take advantage of her being here and conduct her into the house and to the presence of Mrs. Ensley."

"So we will; jove, I hope that she proves to be Mrs. Ensley's daughter, for I am sure the latter is a noble-hearted woman."

"You are right."

The girl was almost up to them now, but had not yet noticed them. The youths glanced up and down the street, saw that no one seemed to be noticing them and stepped out in front of the girl, who stopped suddenly and stared at the two with almost a dazed look of amazement on her face.

"You here?" she exclaimed, her voice trembling with eagerness. "Oh, I am so glad that I have found somebody that I have seen before!"

"Come with us, Miss Emily," said Bob, gently.

"Oh, gladly!" exclaimed Emily. "I know you and can trust you, but that is not the case with anybody other than you that I have seen since coming here."

The girl walked up the steps with Dick and Bob, and just as the former was about to knock on the door it opened and the eager, questioning face of Mrs. Ensley appeared.

"I saw you through the window," she explained, her voice trembling with excitement. "Is this—can it be possible that—that—"

"Yes, Mrs. Ensley, this is the girl we were telling you about," said Bob. "We don't know how it happens that she is in the city, but we are glad that she has come, and she will explain all. Go on in, Miss Emily," this to the girl, who obeyed, with a timid, wondering look at the handsome woman who was looking at her so eagerly and with such a peculiar light in her eyes.

"I believe she is my darling daughter!" the woman said to herself; "something tells me that such is the case."

She led the way into the parlor, the girl following, and after her came Bob, Dick stopping at the front door long enough to lock it. Then he joined the rest in the parlor.

Emily Dunton had taken a seat and removed her bonnet, and the woman of the house was staring at the girl eagerly, drinking in every line and lineament of the beautiful face.

"Look yonder, Miss Emily," said Bob, presently, and he pointed to the portrait on the opposite wall.

The girl looked and a little cry of astonishment escaped her lips.

"W-who is t-that?" she asked.

"That is a portrait of myself at the age of eighteen," said Mrs. Ensley, and then she added:

"Tell me, Emily, have you a mark on your left arm, just

below the elbow—a red mark resembling a five-pointed star?"

The girl started and a look of excitement appeared in her eyes.

"I have," she said, and she slipped her sleeve up and revealed such a mark.

"You are my daughter!" cried the woman, almost hysterically, and she seized the girl in her arms and kissed her again and again.

The girl submitted, though with a puzzled look on her face.

"How comes it that I have lived ever since I can remember with Donald Dunton?" she asked. "I always thought him my father until two days ago, when he told me I was not his daughter. He said that he was sure my mother lived in Philadelphia, and advised that I come to the city and try to find her."

"And you have done so, my own dear, sweet Emily!"

"Why did Dunton tell you you were not his daughter, I wonder?" asked Bob.

"He said that he was going to leave home and follow the patriot army till he succeeded in killing General Washington and putting an end to the war," said the girl, "and I suppose he took pity on me and did not want that I should be left there alone."

"That is something to his credit, anyway," said Dick.

"Yes," agreed Bob.

Then Mrs. Ensley told Emily the story of her abduction, as she had told it to Dick and Bob, and the girl listened with interest. When the woman had finished she looked around the parlor at the rich furniture and furnishings and said, with a sigh of satisfaction:

"I believe that you are my mother, and—I am glad that you are, if this is to be my home."

"It is to be your home always!" was the earnest reply.

But Dick and Bob thought of Dan Morton, the Liberty Boy, who had expressed a determination to win the love of the girl, and had their doubts regarding this being the maiden's home always.

CHAPTER X.

BACK TO THE ENCAMPMENT.

Mrs. Ensley was so happy that she insisted that Dick and Bob should remain till evening and take supper with herself and her new-found daughter.

"I will have the servants get up a feast in celebration of the event," she said. "I am so happy I could sing all the time, and I hope you will stay and join us in the feast."

This was a great temptation to Dick and Bob. They had been roughing it so long on coarse camp fare that it would be a treat indeed for them to sit up to a table loaded down with good things.

So they said they would stay.

"Our only reason for wishing to leave the city immediately was so that we might go after Miss Emily, as we had promised you, Mrs. Ensley," said Dick; "and now that she is here and we do not have to do that, we are in no hurry whatever, but would really prefer to remain and take our leave after nightfall. It will be safer for us."

"Then it is settled! I am so glad that you will stay; and now, if you will excuse us for awhile, we will go upstairs. I wish to see if I can find a gown for Emily that is more in keeping with her station in life than this rough, homespun one that she has on."

The youths bowed, and Mrs. Ensley and Emily left the parlor and went upstairs.

Dick and Bob looked at each other, and Bob said:

"Well, what do you think of it, old man?"

"I think it rather an odd affair, Bob."

"Yes, indeed; it is strange that we should have become mixed up in it the way we have. I judge that if we had not got chased by the Tories and accidentally got into this house Mrs. Ensley and her daughter might never have been brought together."

"Likely not; though they might have, since the girl had come to the city and had been told by Dunton that she was not his daughter and that he believed her mother lived in Philadelphia."

"Yes, but Philadelphia is quite a city, and she might never have found her mother."

"True."

An hour later Mrs. Ensley and her daughter returned to the parlor.

The youths stared in amazement and admiration, for Emily was now dressed in a handsome gown and she looked beautiful, indeed.

Her mother saw the look on the youths' faces and was greatly pleased.

"She looks more like she should look now, does she not?" the woman asked.

"Yes," said Dick; "her beauty is enhanced by the dress, though she was beautiful enough in the old dress."

The girl blushed.

"I felt more comfortable in the old one," she said, with a smile.

"You will soon get used to this one," said her mother.

The youths remained till supper time and then the four went into the big dining-room and seated themselves at the table.

It was loaded down with good things, and the two Liberty Boys enjoyed the feast hugely. It was a great treat to them, and Mrs. Ensley was glad to see that such was the case.

The servants who waited on the table stared at Emily with interest, for they had heard that their mistress' daughter had been found, and they wished to see what she looked like.

Their decision was that their mistress had a very beautiful daughter, indeed.

"She's jes' ez sweet ez she kin be," said one of the colored

servants, and the others concurred in this view of the matter.

Dick and Bob remained till after dark and then bade Mrs. Ensley and Emily goodby and took their leave, though not till the woman had insisted that they come and see her and her new-found daughter often.

"We will do so," said Dick; "if the British remain in Philadelphia, which I think they will, I will be coming here frequently to spy on them, and it will be convenient for me to have some place to come to, if it won't inconvenience you or endanger your safety."

"I want that you shall come here every time you come to the city, Mr. Slater; you must make my home your headquarters. I shall feel hurt if you do not."

"Thank you, I will do so, then," was the reply.

Then the two took their departure.

They felt in good spirits, for they were glad that they had been instrumental in making Mrs. Ensley happy and in finding a home and parent for Emily, in whom they were greatly interested.

"There's one thing about this matter that isn't exactly to my liking," said Dick, as they walked along discussing the affair, "and that is, that it will make it a difficult matter for Dan to win Emily."

"That's so, Dick; he could have approached her at the cabin down in the backwoods, but it will be difficult for him to do so now that she is in that fine house in the city here."

"Dan is a fine fellow and well worthy of her, Bob."

"Yes, there is no doubt regarding that."

They were silent a few minutes, and then Dick suddenly said:

"I have thought of a plan, Bob."

"What is it, Dick?"

"This: Every time I come to the city on a spying expedition I will bring Dan along with me and we will go to Mrs. Ensley's home and make it our headquarters."

"That is a good scheme, Dick; it will give Dan a chance to win Emily."

"Yes; you see, I will make the excuse that I wish to go out and reconnoiter alone and will leave Dan at the house with Mrs. Ensley and Emily, and then if he doesn't succeed in winning the girl it will be his own fault."

"So it will. He'll do it, Dick, if such a thing is possible."

"I think so."

Then they turned their attention to what was going on around them.

They wished to secure some information regarding the intentions of the British, if possible, before going back to the patriot encampment.

As soon as they got onto Market street they found it fairly thronged with people, at least fifty percent of whom were British soldiers.

The soldiers were evidently bent on enjoying themselves, and many of them were beginning to show the effects of the liquor they had been imbibing.

The redcoats were in parties of from four to six, and they

talked and laughed loudly and took up the entire width of the sidewalk as they moved along.

Here there was a group standing still and talking, and Dick and Bob paused whenever they came near a group of this kind and listened to the conversation.

In this manner they hoped to acquire some information, and at last they were successful, for one of the groups near which they stopped happened to be talking about the very things the youths wished to hear talked about.

The youths quickly learned that the British had been ordered to secure permanent quarters, as it was intended to remain in the city a good while, possibly all winter.

Then the talk of the redcoats drifted to another matter that was of great interest to Dick and Bob. They began talking of the patriot forts, Mercer and Mifflin, which were down the Delaware a few miles; the first named fort was on the east bank of the river, while the other was on an island in mid-stream.

The soldiers said that the British ships could not come up the river until after the forts had been reduced, and that it was intended to do this at once.

"As soon as the forts are captured the ships will be free to come up to the city with provisions and supplies of all kinds," said one of the soldiers.

"That's so; I heard this afternoon that the attempt to capture the fort is to be made right away."

The Liberty Boys listened to this talk with interest, as may be well understood. They remained and listened as long as the matter of the forts was the subject of conversation, and when it ceased to be and the talk turned to personal affairs they walked away.

"Bob," said Dick, when they were where no one would be likely to hear what was said, "we must get back to the encampment and report this matter to General Washington."

"So we must, Dick."

"It is of great importance."

"So it is."

"The commander-in-chief will send reinforcements to the forts, don't you think?"

"I should think so, if he feels that there is any chance to hold the forts."

"Well, he won't give them up without a struggle, I am confident."

"That is what I think."

The two made their way along and were not noticed, the street was thronged so. They headed toward the suburbs, and as the crowd grew thinner they walked faster.

They continued walking rapidly till they neared the extreme edge of the city, and then they slackened their pace, for they did not doubt that they would find sentinels on duty there.

They were almost out of the city—were right at the entrance to a country road—when they were challenged.

"You slip around and come up behind the fellow, while I keep his attention directed to me, Bob," whispered Dick, and Bob stole away to do as bidden.

"What is wanted?" called out Dick.

"Who are you?" came back the question.

"A friend."

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign," was the order.

"All right, I'm coming."

Dick walked slowly forward; he wished to give Bob time to do his part of the work.

Presently Dick was close up to the sentinel. It was quite dark, but it was possible to see the outlines of the man's form.

"Halt! Stand where you are!" the redcoat ordered, sternly. "Don't come any closer until you have given the countersign."

At this moment Dick caught sight of a shadowy form just back of the sentinel and knew that Bob was on hand.

"Oh, you want me to give the countersign, eh?" said Dick.

"Of course, you fool. You can't get past here till you have done so."

At this instant there was a dull chug, and the sentinel gave utterance to a gasping groan and sank in his tracks. Bob had dealt him a blow on the head with the butt of a pistol.

"The coast is clear now, Dick; come along," said Bob, in a cautious voice.

Then they hastened onward and were soon safely away from the city.

They arrived at the patriot encampment at last and went at once to the headquarters tent and reported to General Washington.

CHAPTER XI.

THE KEGS OF GUNPOWDER.

The commander-in-chief was glad to see the youths.

When they told him of the attempt that was to be made to capture Forts Mercer and Mifflin, he nodded his head.

"I thought that would be the move that would likely be made," he said; "they will have to capture the forts before their ships can come up to the city."

"Do you think they can capture them, your excellency?" asked Dick.

"I fear they can, Dick; we cannot get enough men into the forts to hold them against the enemy."

"Will you send reinforcements, sir?"

"There is not much use in doing so, my boy; there are about as many men in the forts as can work to advantage. They will have to do the best they can, hold out as long as they can, and then evacuate the forts and make their escape."

Then Dick asked that he and his Liberty Boys might be permitted to go and do what they could toward aiding the soldiers in the fort.

"You're welcome to do so," said General Washington; "but I fear you will be unable to accomplish much."

"We may be able to do something, sir, and we shall be glad to make the attempt."

The youths talked awhile longer and then went back to their own quarters.

They told the Liberty Boys the story of their adventures in Philadelphia, and when Dan Morton learned that the girl, Emily Dunton, was in the city and that she had found a mother there, he was greatly surprised.

"You say her mother is rich?" he asked of Dick.

"Yes, Dan."

The youth's face fell.

"Jove, that is bad news for me," he said; "I am afraid I won't get a chance to try to win her after all."

"There is a saying to the effect that faint heart ne'er won fair lady," said Dick, with a smile. "Don't give up, Dan."

"I don't intend to, but I don't just see how I am to get a chance to win the girl; I can't go there without an invitation."

"Of course not; but you have an invitation, Dan."

The youth stared in amazement.

"How is that?" he asked.

"Well, you see, Bob and I have a standing invitation to come and to bring any of our comrades, and I am going to be good to you, my boy, and take you along next time and give you a chance."

Dan seized Dick's hand and shook it heartily.

"Dick, you are a friend worth having!" he said. "I shall not forget this, you may be sure."

"Oh, that's all right; I wish you luck, Dan."

"When are you going to the city again?"

"Oh, not for several days, probably; we have some other work to attend to first."

"What, Dick?"

"Work for us?"

"Tell us about it, old man."

"We want something to do."

Such were a few of the exclamations and questions fired at Dick, and he at once explained what the work was that they were to do.

When the youths learned that they were to go to the forts and help hold them against the British on the warships they were delighted.

This was just to their liking.

The fact that it was almost a foregone conclusion that it would be impossible to hold the forts did not have any deterring effect on them. They were, if anything, all the more eager to go.

Forlorn hopes were just to their liking. It gave them a chance, always, to do some desperate and daring work, in which they were delighted. The only trouble about this affair was that they were to fight soldiers on ships, and could not do any maneuvering as was possible on battle-fields.

They asked Dick when they should start, and he said they would leave camp soon after midnight, so as to reach

the river at the point where the forts were located by morning.

The youths threw themselves down to get some sleep before time to start, and the majority succeeded in catching a nap that would be sufficient for their needs.

Soon after midnight they were up and stirring.

They left the encampment and moved away toward the southwest.

They had a long walk ahead of them, but did not mind this. They were used to hard work.

Dick had guessed pretty well, for they arrived at the river, at a point opposite the forts, an hour before sunrise.

They looked around and presently found a flatboat with oars at the side. It would hold at least twenty-five men, and this would make it a simple matter to reach the forts.

Being fearful that they might be mistaken for an enemy in the dark, however, Dick did not make any move to embark until after daylight.

Then, in company with twenty-five of his youths, Dick embarked on the boat and rowed toward Fort Mifflin, which, being on an island in midstream, was much nearer than Fort Mercer, it being on the opposite bank of the river.

The youths were seen by the patriot soldiers and officers in Fort Mifflin, but they were recognized as being patriots, and so were not in any danger of being fired upon.

They landed on the island and tying the boat, the youths entered the fort.

Dick sought out the officer in command and told him that the Liberty Boys were there for the purpose of helping hold the forts.

"I am glad to have you with us," said the officer. "I have heard of your good work on the fields of battle, and we shall be glad to have you help us."

Dick talked the matter over with the officer and decided, finally, to leave fifty of the youths in Fort Mifflin and to go over to Fort Mercer with the rest.

This having been decided, he and a sufficient number of the youths to man the oars went back to the shore and brought another load of Liberty Boys to the fort.

Again they went back, and this load was taken across to Fort Mercer, where they were given a hearty welcome.

The boat made another trip, bringing the rest of the Liberty boys across, and then the attention of all in both forts became directed toward the British warships, which could be seen coming slowly up the river.

Closer and closer the ships came, and it became evident that the British were thinking of trying to run past the forts.

At once all was excitement within the forts. The soldiers took their places at the guns, and preparations were made to make it warm for the British.

Closer and closer the warships came, and when they were within range the patriots opened fire with the cannon.

The British responded, and soon the cannonading was brisk.

The patriots in the forts did such good work that the British decided it would not be safe to try to get past the

forts, and so, after an hour of cannonading, the warships turned and sailed back down the river till out of range, when they came to anchor.

The patriots were well pleased.

They had practically won a victory over the enemy.

The British had been forced to retreat.

"We can hold the warships back, I feel sure," said the commander of Fort Mercer to Dick; "but the trouble is that the British will soon send a shore force to attack us from that direction at the same time that the warships are firing upon us, and then we will be forced to evacuate, likely, and retreat."

"Yes, that would make it bad for us," said Dick.

"So it would; jove, I wish we could strike the British on the warships a hard blow before the land force puts in an appearance."

"Perhaps we may be able to do so."

The commander shook his head.

"I can think of no way that it could be accomplished," he said.

Dick looked thoughtful.

"There may be some way," he said.

"If you can think of something I shall be very glad," was the reply.

Presently Dick looked up.

"Have you plenty of powder?" he asked.

"Yes, plenty," was the reply. "I think there must be twenty kegs in the magazine."

Dick nodded his head, a look of satisfaction on his face.

"May I have the use of about a dozen of them?" he asked.

"Yes; we won't be in the fort long enough to use the powder in more than two or three of the kegs, and will have to leave them behind when we go, so if you can utilize them you are welcome to do so."

"Thank you; have a dozen of the kegs brought up."

The commander gave the order and some of the gunners' assistants brought the kegs up out of the magazine.

Dick asked that the kegs be carried to the shore, and this was done.

There was a float there, to which the flatboat was fastened, and the kegs were placed near this float.

Not far distant was a sandy strip, and on this strip were hundreds of flint stones of all sizes. Dick ordered the Liberty Boys to gather a lot of these, and they did so, piling them near the kegs.

Then he sent them into the fort to get as many pieces of steel as was possible. The gunners had a goodly supply, and soon the youths were back, bringing a large number of small pieces.

Then Dick told the gunners to remove the heads of the kegs of gunpowder.

"Be careful," he said; "for I wish the heads put back in again, and so carefully that the kegs won't leak."

The gunners said they could do this, and they did so.

Then Dick placed a layer of flint stones, mixed with

which were pieces of steel, on top of the powder in each keg, after which he told the gunners to replace the heads.

The commander of the fort had come ashore and was watching the work with interest.

"If one of those kegs was struck a hard enough blow to crush the head in there would be an explosion, would there not?" he asked.

"I think so," said Dick. "At any rate, I hope so; that is why I fixed them in this fashion. It is my opinion that the flint and steel would grind together and generate a spark that would ignite the powder and cause an explosion."

"What do you think about it?" asked the commander, addressing one of the gunners who was standing near.

"I think it would cause an explosion," he said. "At any rate I wouldn't like to be near if someone was going to stave the head of one of the kegs in with a sledgehammer."

In order to see whether the kegs would float, a couple were placed in the water. They floated and moved down the stream at a good rate of speed.

"Are you going to send them all down the stream now?" the commander asked Dick.

"I was thinking it would be better to wait till nightfall," was the reply; "what do you think about it?"

"I hardly think it necessary to wait," was the reply; "but do as you think best."

They discussed the matter quite awhile, and Dick finally decided to send all the kegs down the stream. By this time the two that had been sent adrift were halfway down to where the warships were anchored.

"I guess we may as well put the kegs into the water and send them on their way," said Dick, taking his place at the edge of the float. "Bring them along, boys."

The Liberty Boys carried the kegs and placed them in the water, while Dick pushed them away from the float with a pike pole.

Suddenly one of the kegs struck a rock and exploded, making a terrible noise and causing the British on the warships to stare agast.

CHAPTER XII.

EVACUATING THE FORTS.

It was one of the two kegs that had been sent away at first that struck the rock and exploded.

It was more than halfway from the fort down to where the warships were anchored when it struck the rock, and the British had a good view of the explosion. Water was hurled high in the air, and it was plain that had the keg been close to a warship when the accident occurred the ship would have suffered material damage.

It was unfortunate for the success of the plan that the keg had struck the rock, for now the British understood that a scheme was afoot to blow up their ships.

The commanders of the warships ordered the boats to be

lowered and manned, and when this had been done the men on the boats were ordered to keep a sharp lookout for more kegs and to seize them and take them to the shore.

Dick and the commander saw what the British were doing and realized that it would be useless to try to carry out the plan, so Dick ordered that the four remaining kegs should not be placed in the water.

"We will hold them until after nightfall," he said, "and perhaps we may be able to blow up a warship, after all."

They went back into the fort and waited to see what the British would do.

They could see the boats moving about and knew the redcoats were gathering the kegs and taking them to the shore.

"All right; we will still have four on hand that they won't get hold of," said Dick.

"I hope that we may succeed in blowing at least one of the warships out of water," said the commander of the fort.

Dick said the same.

The day passed quietly, the British not making any further move toward trying to get past the forts. Neither did any land force put in an appearance.

The failure of the land force to appear caused the patriots considerable satisfaction, as it would give them a chance to send the four remaining kegs of gunpowder down the river, and it might result in the destruction of at least one of the vessels.

Night came at last, and when it was as dark as it would be Dick and his Liberty Boys went ashore, and, placing the kegs in the water, sent them floating down the river.

Then they returned to the fort and all waited eagerly and expectantly, hoping to hear the sound of an explosion.

They knew about how long it had taken the other kegs to float down to where the warships were, and so knew about how long to wait on the four that had been sent adrift.

The time had just about expired, when there came the sound of a loud report from down the stream.

Then suddenly a light was observed, and it soon proved to be flames, and by their light it was seen that a ship had been wrecked by the keg that had exploded. The warship had caught on fire and was soon blazing fiercely.

The scene was lighted up by the flames, and the other warships could be seen with tolerable distinctness. Boats were seen, and it was evident that soldiers and sailors who had been blown into the water were being picked up and taken to the other vessels.

The patriots were delighted.

"Hurrah! we got one of the warships, anyway!" cried Bob.

"Yes, so we did," said Dick, "and I am glad of it."

This sentiment was echoed by all.

The patriots in Fort Mifflin understood the matter and were delighted.

The wrecked warship burned briskly for quite awhile, but at last the fire got down to the water and was extinguished, leaving all in darkness.

The night passed quietly after that.

Next morning, however, things soon took a serious turn, for scouts who had been out watching came to the fort with news of the coming of the British.

A strong land force was on its way to attack Fort Mercer.

At the same time the British warships were seen moving up the river, and it was evidently for the purpose of acting in concert with the land force.

Soon the engagement was on.

The cannon began to speak and the roar was heard for miles around.

The warships concentrated their fire on Fort Mifflin while the land force attacked Fort Mercer.

It did not take the patriots long to see that they would be forced to evacuate, but it would not do to make the attempt until after they had forced the British to pause and retire to rest awhile.

After two hours of hot work the British land force did retire, and the patriots seized upon the opportunity, and, leaving the fort, entered the timber, where they felt that they would be safe.

The British on the warships kept on firing at the patriots in Fort Mifflin, but their fire was returned so spiritedly that they at last retired down the river out of range.

The flatboat had been sent across to Fort Mifflin before the engagement began, and so now the work of evacuating Fort Mifflin was begun. By the time the British learned what was taking place the last load of soldiers was being taken to the mainland, and, although the warships hastened up the stream, they did not get in range soon enough to do any damage with their cannon.

They had reduced the two forts, however, and were free to go up to the city, and felt satisfied.

The patriots were fairly well satisfied also, for they had made as good a fight as was possible under the circumstances, and through the use of the kegs of gunpowder had succeeded in destroying one of the warships.

The land force of British now made an attempt to hem the patriot force in and force it to surrender, but they did not succeed.

The patriots were more at home in the timber than was the case with the redcoats, and they moved with more rapidity.

They were on the wrong side of the river, but thought it possible that they would succeed in getting across to the other side in safety sooner or later.

When they had shaken the British off and were at a safe distance from them the patriots took it easier and marched steadily onward.

When they were a mile or so east of the stream they turned northward and went in that direction.

There was a ferry across the Delaware at a point three or four miles above Philadelphia, and it was the patriots' purpose to reach the vicinity of this ferry, wait till after nightfall and then cross under cover of the darkness.

They marched steadily till nearly noon, when they paused and ate what rations they had in their haversacks.

This was not much, but it stayed the pangs of hunger a little.

They remained here till nightfall and then marched toward the river.

They struck the stream at a point only half a mile from the ferry, and were soon there. The ferryman was a man who was on the lookout for a chance to make some money, and he did not ask any questions, but went to work ferrying the soldiers across.

This was a big task, and it was not finished until near midnight. The commander of the force gave the ferryman some silver and then gave the order to march.

The force set out, with the Liberty Boys in front, as they knew where the main patriot army was encamped, and the soldiers who had been in the fort did not.

They reached the encampment a couple of hours before daylight and found the force that had been in Fort Mifflin there ahead of them, as had been expected.

The Liberty Boys went to their quarters and threw themselves down and slept till daylight.

Then they got up and ate breakfast and talked of their adventures in the forts.

They were particularly well pleased on account of having been successful in destroying the British warship with the keg of gunpowder.

They gave Dick all the credit for this.

"That was a splendid idea, Dick," said Bob. "How did you come to think of it, anyway?"

"I don't know, Bob; I was trying to think of something to do that would worry the redcoats on the warships and the idea came to me, that is all."

"Well, I'm glad it did," from Sam Sanderson.

"So am I," from Mark Morrison.

"Yes, by destroying the warship I think we came out even with the redcoats, at least," said Dan Morton.

All agreed that it had been a splendid idea, and it gave them a great deal of satisfaction to think that they had succeeded in destroying one of the warships.

"It was impossible for us to keep the British from capturing the forts, though," said one.

"Oh, we knew that from the first," said Dick; "but we wanted to make the British all the trouble possible."

"Well we did make them some trouble."

General Washington sent word for Dick to come to headquarters and the youth went at once.

The commander-in-chief had heard about the blowing up of the warship with the keg of gunpowder and wished to congratulate Dick for his share in the affair.

Dick was modest and disclaimed the credit, but the commander-in-chief knew that but for Dick the plan would not have been thought of, and gave him full credit for it.

"And now that the British warships can come up to Philadelphia, I think it likely that the British may attempt some move of importance," he said. "I shall depend on you, Dick, to keep me posted regarding what is going on in the city."

"I shall be glad to undertake the work, your excellency," said Dick.

"I was sure that would be the case."

"Of course I cannot guarantee that I shall be able to be successful, sir," the youth said; "but I will do my best to learn the plans of the British, and if I do learn anything will bring you the news at once."

CHAPTER XIII.

DAN MAKES A GOOD IMPRESSION.

When Dick went back to the quarters occupied by the Liberty Boys he told them what the commander-in-chief wanted him to do, and he made Dan Morton happy by telling him that he should go to Philadelphia in company with Dick.

"That will give you a chance to get acquainted with Emily Ensley, Dan," said Bob. "You want to fix yourself up and look your best."

"I am going to do that," was the reply.

Dick did not think it policy to try to enter the city in the daytime. He feared there might be some redcoats who would recognize him.

"We will wait till evening to start," he said, "and we will slip in."

He and Dan started soon after supper that evening and were within a mile of the city when darkness came.

This was just as they wished it. They had had daylight in which to come most of the way, and now they would have the darkness to veil their movements while entering the city.

"I suppose they will have sentinels out, Dick?" remarked Dan, as they were nearing the city.

"Quite likely."

"Then we will have to be careful."

"Yes; we will have to get the sentinels located and then slip past them."

This was put into practice.

Dick was an expert at such work, and they did not have much difficulty in getting past the sentinels unseen and unchallenged.

Then they walked boldly along the streets, for once within the city they would not be likely to be suspected.

At last they reached Market street and made their way along it.

The street was thronged with people, some being citizens and many being British soldiers.

The night was a warm one and everybody seemed to be out getting some air.

Of course, in such a crowd Dick and Dan did not attract any attention.

This suited them very well, indeed.

They walked along till they came to the street that led toward the home of Mrs. Ensley.

Dick and his comrade turned down this street, and when they reached the next corner they turned to the left and were soon at the steps leading to the door of Mrs. Ensley's house.

A light was shining from the window of the parlor, and Dick knew the inmates of the house were still up.

They walked up the steps and Dick knocked on the door. It was opened by a negro servant.

"Tell your mistress that Dick Slater is here," the youth said.

"Come in, sahs," was the reply, as he held the door open. "Ah recommends you de time you wuz heah befoah, sah."

The two entered and took seats in the hall, while the servant went to tell his mistress of their presence.

Soon there was the rustle of a dress, and Mrs. Ensley came down the stairs and approached with beaming face and outstretched hand.

"Oh, Mr. Slater!" she exclaimed; "I am so glad to see you, and your friend, also," and she turned toward Dan, after shaking hands with Dick.

"Oh, it isn't Mr. Estabrook," she said, in a slightly disappointed voice.

"No, he couldn't come this time," said Dick; "but this is another dear friend of mine, and I am sure you will like him. His name is Daniel Morton; Dan, Mrs. Ensley."

Dan made his best bow, and as he was a handsome fellow, Mrs. Ensley was very favorably impressed with his appearance.

"I am glad to know you, Mrs. Ensley," he said, pleasantly. "Dick has told me the story of how your daughter was returned to you, and naturally it aroused my interest. I saw your daughter once when she was at her old home away down in the backwoods."

"Thank goodness, you will never see her there again!" the woman declared.

Then she invited the two into the parlor, and they went. When they had seated themselves she rang a bell and the servant appeared.

"Please tell your young mistress that Captain Dick Slater and a comrade are here," the woman ordered, and the servant bowed and withdrew.

A few minutes later there was a rustle of a dress, and Emily Ensley, looking more beautiful than ever, entered the room.

Dan almost gasped, he was so overcome by the beauty of the girl, and his heart almost failed him. He said to himself that he could not hope to win the maiden.

"I'll try, though," he said to himself, determinedly; "I'll make a determined effort, for—I love her!"

Emily advanced and shook hands with Dick and gave him a pleasant greeting; and then she acknowledged the introduction which he gave her to Dan.

The girl gave the youth her hand with rather a diffident, backward air and there was a slight flush on her face and her voice trembled the least bit when she spoke, for—her woman's intuition told her that this was the young man

who had declared that he would win her, if he had to desert in order to stay near her and put his plan into effect.

"So his name is Dan Morton?" the girl said to herself. "Well, he is handsome, very handsome, and I—I—almost believe—that I—that I—love him now!"

Dan could not keep his eyes off Emily, and there was the light of a great love glowing in them. Mrs. Ensley, who was a very observant woman, noticed this right away, and she was worried a bit regarding it. She knew nothing regarding the youth, and was not at all sure she was pleased to have such a state of affairs exist.

"He may and he may not be a desirable young man," she told herself; "and I don't want that he shall have a chance to make love to Emily, unless I become convinced that he is all that a young man should be."

She decided to speak to Dick regarding the matter, for she had every confidence in that youth, and would believe whatever he told her.

Dick soon rose to go, with the explanation that he wished to reconnoiter and see if there was anything to be learned.

"You will make my home your headquarters while in the city, Mr. Slater; don't forget that," said Mrs. Ensley.

"I shall do so, Mrs. Ensley; it makes it very pleasant and convenient for us to do this, I assure you. I will leave Mr. Morton here this evening, as I prefer to go alone."

"Very well; we will take care of him while you are gone."

Mrs. Ensley accompanied Dick to the door and asked him about Dan. She told Dick that she knew the youth was in love with Emily, and asked him what he thought about the matter and what kind of a young man Dan was.

"A finer fellow does not live, Mrs. Ensley," said Dick, earnestly; "he is brave, honest, honorable and true-hearted, and in my opinion it would be an honor to any girl to be loved by him."

The woman was impressed. She had faith in Dick, and felt that he would not praise anyone unless the praise were deserved.

"But how happens it that he is in love with my daughter?" Mrs. Ensley asked; "he must have seen her before tonight?"

"You are right; he said so awhile ago in there, don't you remember?"

"Oh, yes; so he did. Then he must have fallen in love with her on that occasion?"

"He did." Then Dick told how Dan had been struck with the girl and how he had said he was going to win her love, if he had to desert in order to do it.

Mrs. Ensley listened with interest. She understood the matter now and knew that Dick favored the match, and had brought the young man along on purpose to give him an opportunity to press his suit. She asked him if this were not the case, and he acknowledged that it was.

"I think your daughter likes him, Mrs. Ensley," he said, "and as you are bound to lose her some time, why not give my comrade a chance?"

The woman was silent and thoughtful for a few moments, and Dick went on:

"You are here in Philadelphia among the Tories and redcoats, and the chances are that unless you let my comrade have a chance to win the love of your daughter you will be forced to see some young Tory stepping in and doing this. I give you my word of honor that you will never find a finer young fellow than Dan Morton. I would be proud to have him for a brother-in-law, if my sister were not already engaged to Bob Estabrook who was here with me before."

"Well," said the woman, with a sigh; "I guess you are right, Mr. Slater, and as I would rather have someone recommended by you court my daughter than to wait and not know who may take a notion to do so, I shall interpose no obstacle in the young man's way. He shall be welcome to remain beneath my roof and win the love of my daughter, if he can do so."

"Thank you, Mrs. Ensley; I regard that in the light of the granting of a favor to myself, and I feel sure that I can give you every assurance that you will never regret your decision."

"I hope that I never shall, and I believe that I shall not do so, Mr. Slater."

Then Dick took his departure and Mrs. Ensley went back into the parlor and engaged Dan in conversation. She watched him closely and studied him, and at last came to the conclusion that Dick was right in his estimate of the youth.

"I believe he is all that Mr. Slater claims him to be," she told herself. "Well, I am glad of it, for I feel sure that Emily is very favorably impressed with him."

Dan shrewdly suspected that Mrs. Ensley had followed Dick out to make inquiries regarding him, and he did his best to make a favorable impression on the mother of the girl he loved. He believed that he had succeeded, too, and was glad of it.

He talked to Emily quite a good deal, and when doing so he could hardly keep his voice from trembling. Anyone much less keen-eyed and observing than a mother would have known that he was in love with Emily.

Dick was gone about two hours and found the three in the parlor when he returned.

He told them that he had reconnoitered quite a good deal, but had not been able to learn anything of interest.

It did not take him long to see that Dan was getting along all right with both Emily and her mother. He was very glad of this.

"I guess Dan will come out all right," thought Dick.

They talked awhile, and presently Dick said:

"I fear we are keeping you up. You must not let us inconvenience you."

Mrs. Ensley said that they rarely retired at an early hour.

"We remain up and read or talk," she said; "so it is not inconveniencing us in the least to stay up in this manner."

Dick said that he and Dan might as well retire, as they would want to get up early, and a servant was summoned and showed them to their room.

When they were alone Dick asked Dan how he was making it with his love affair.

"All right, I think, Dick," was the reply. "I am not egotistical at all, but I believe the girl likes me, and her mother seems to have a very good opinion of me."

"I told her you were all right, Dan," said Dick; "and then he told his comrade about the conversation he had had with Mrs. Ensley.

"I guess that all you have to do is to keep up your courage and go in and win, Dan," he said.

"I hope you are right, Dick," was the reply.

CHAPTER XIV.

DONALD DUNTON AGAIN.

Dick and Dan remained in Philadelphia four days.

They spent most of the days in the house in the company of Mrs. Ensley and Emily and at night Dick usually went out alone to spy on the British. Dan insisted on going once, to disarm any suspicions Mrs. Ensley might have to the effect that all he was there for was to court her daughter, and Dick let him go along on this occasion.

Dan made good progress in his love affair. Emily, it was easy to see, was learning to love him, and Dick was well pleased. Mrs. Ensley was not displeased, for she was studying Dan closely all the time, and she had come to the conclusion that Dick's estimate of his comrade was correct and that he was as fine a young fellow as could be found.

At the end of the four days Dick said they must return to the patriot encampment and make a report.

"I haven't learned a great deal of interest and value," he said; "but the commander-in-chief will be wanting to hear from me, so we will go at once."

"You will be back again, however, will you not?" Mrs. Ensley asked.

"Yes," replied Dick, and with a swift glance at Emily he nodded: "Dan and I will come again."

Dan flashed a grateful look at Dick, and Mrs. Ensley and Dick who were watching Emily out of the corner of their eyes saw a pleased look come over her face.

"That settles it; she is in love with Dan," said Dick to himself. "Well, I'm glad of it."

"Emily loves him!" was the mother's thought. "Well, I am not sorry, for I am convinced that he is a fine, noble-hearted young fellow."

The two waited till nightfall and then bade Mrs. Ensley and Emily goodby and took their departure.

They were successful in getting out of the city without clashing with the British sentinels and finally reached the patriot encampment.

They went to the Liberty Boys' quarters and lay down and slept till morning, for there was nothing of sufficient importance to report to make it worth while bothering the commander-in-chief at night.

After breakfast next morning Dick made his way to the tent occupied by General Washington and was given a warm greeting.

"Come outside, where it will be cooler," the commander-in-chief said.

They went out and sat on campstools under a tree, where it was shady.

Dick made his report, which was to the effect that the British showed no signs of making any move of importance.

"They have settled down as though to remain all winter," he said. "They have taken up their quarters in various buildings in the city and have made themselves at home. They are living on the fat of the land, taking things easy and enjoying themselves."

General Washington thought that Dick's idea, that the British had settled down to remain all winter in the city, was not far from the correct one, and said so.

"Our position here is not a satisfactory one," he said; "and I think that I shall move my army to Whitemarsh, where we will have such a strong position that the British could not do anything if they were to try. I will call a council and see what the members of my staff have to say regarding the matter."

Just as he finished speaking there came the sharp report of a rifle, and the commander-in-chief's hat was knocked from his head by a bullet!

Some hidden enemy had made an attempt to assassinate the patriot general!

Dick leaped up with an exclamation of alarm and anger and looked all around. General Washington picked up his hat and replaced it on his head, remarking, calmly:

"That was a close call, Captain Slater."

Dick's keen eyes detected a ring of smoke curling upward from the top of a large tree over beyond the edge of the encampment, and he bounded in that direction, crying out as he did so:

"The scoundrel is in that tree, yonder! Surround it and don't let him get away!"

The news that someone had attempted to assassinate the commander-in-chief flew through the camp like wildfire, and soon all was excitement.

Soldiers leaped up and seized their muskets and ran hither and thither.

A number who were near the headquarters tent when the shot was fired and heard and saw him running toward the tree in question, followed.

When Dick was still thirty yards from the tree a man dropped out of it to the ground and ran away with all his might.

After him dashed Dick.

The Liberty Boy's blood was up.

"I will catch you, you cowardly scoundrel!" he said to himself; "you cannot, you shall not escape!"

After the fugitive went Dick, and after him came the soldiers, eager to render the youth assistance.

The fugitive was a good runner, but he was not as speedy as Dick, and the Liberty Boy gradually drew up with him.

Closer and closer Dick drew to the fugitive, and when he was within ten yards of the man he made a discovery.

"It was Donald Dunton!"

This was the thought that flashed through Dick's mind.

And he was right. The would-be assassin was no other than Dunton, who had stated that he was going to kill the commander-in-chief of the patriot army and thus bring the war to an end.

He had attempted to make his threat good.

"But you will never have the chance to make another attempt," said Dick to himself, grimly; "I am going to capture you and take you back to the encampment and you will be shot or hanged."

He quickly closed the gap between himself and the fugitive, and when he was close enough he leaped forward and grasped the man by the coat collar.

"Stop!" he cried. "You can't get away, Donald Dunton. Stop and surrender!"

"Never!" the fellow cried, and he at once entered into a struggle with the youth.

Doubtless he fancied he would be able to easily overpower the youth, but he quickly found his mistake. Dick was more than a match for Dunton, and even had it been otherwise the soldiers were now close at hand, and a few moments later they arrived on the scene and seized Dunton.

He was now helpless, and, realizing the uselessness of making further resistance, he ceased struggling.

"That is sensible," said Dick; "now come right along with us, Donald Dunton."

They conducted him back to the encampment and found it all excitement. The soldiers were moving about and talking excitedly, while the officers were gathered around the commander-in-chief, inquiring if he were injured and asking to hear the story of the affair.

When Dunton was taken before General Washington, the great man eyed him sternly.

"What have you to say for yourself, my man?" he asked.

"Nothing—save that I am sorry I missed ye," was the sullen reply.

"Oh, you are sorry you missed me, eh?" The commander-in-chief's voice hardened and there was a threatening look in his eyes.

"Yas."

"Why did you try to assassinate me?"

"I thought that by doin' so I might bring ther war ter an end."

The commander-in-chief started.

"Oh, you are the man who sent me the warning!" he exclaimed; "it was you who asked me to resign as commander-in-chief of the patriot army, under pain of death if I refused to do so."

"I'm ther man." This was said with rather an air of pride, if not bravado.

The commander-in-chief looked keenly and searchingly

at the prisoner for a few moments. Then he said, slowly and deliberately, yet with considerable sternness:

"I think you are a dangerous man. You must die! But because you were fair enough to send me a warning before making the attempt to assassinate me, I shall not order you to be hanged; instead, you shall die by the bullet. Captain Slater, take him away and execute him at once."

Dick bowed and let the way from the spot, a number of soldiers following leading the prisoner.

They went into the timber a distance of about one hundred yards and tied Dunton to a tree. Then Dick selected ten soldiers and ordered that the bullets be drawn out of five of the muskets belonging to the men selected.

This was done and then the weapons were taken aside and mixed up so that it was impossible to know which held bullets and which did not. This done, the ten soldiers took the weapons, stationed themselves at a point ten paces distant from the doomed man, and leveled the muskets and awaited the command to fire.

It was not long in coming, for Dick did not believe in torturing the doomed man. He simply waited long enough to ask him if there was any word he wished to leave for anyone, and Dunton said there was not. Then Dick asked him if he wanted time to pray, and he said he didn't know how.

"Et hez gotter come, I guess," he said; "so go erhead. Don' keep me waitin'."

Dick took the doomed man at his word and gave the command to fire.

The volley rang out and Dunton was hit by three bullets and was killed instantly.

They buried him and then went back to the encampment. Dick went to headquarters and made his report.

"It is well," said General Washington; "the fellow was just simple enough to keep on trying, and he might have succeeded in killing me."

"True," said Dick.

A council was held and it was decided to move the army to Whitemarsh, so the army broke camp and marched away.

Dick and Dan Morton remained behind, however, for they intended to return to Philadelphia and keep watch on the British.

They remained at the point where the patriots had been encamped till evening, and then set out for the city.

They arrived there soon after dark, and as on the former occasion, managed to slip past the sentinels without being discovered.

They went straight to the home of Mrs. Ensley and were given a warm welcome.

Emily blushed like a peony when she saw Dan, and that youth was almost wild with delight.

"How long do you think we will be in the city this time, Dick?" he asked that night, after they had gone to their room.

"I don't know, Dan; perhaps only one or two days, perhaps a week."

"Well, say, old fellow, I'm going to ask Emily to be my wife before we leave, be it one day or a dozen!"

"I would if I were you, Dan."

"What do you think of my chances, old man?"

"I think they are good, Dan; I feel sure that you will win."

"I hope so; jove, I would be the most miserable fellow in the world if she was to tell me 'no.' I would get killed in the first battle we got into."

"I don't think you will need to do anything like that, my boy."

They remained in Philadelphia more than a week, and during all this time they were busy, Dick trying to secure information regarding the intentions of the British, Dan making love to Emily.

Dick told Dan a day ahead of the time, when he had decided to leave the city, and the youth asked Emily that evening to marry him. To his unbounded delight she said she would, and when he asked Mrs. Ensley to give her consent she did so, thus making his cup of happiness full to overflowing.

He was the happiest fellow in Philadelphia, and he thanked Dick again and again for what he had done to aid him in his lovemaking.

"But for you I should never have won her, I am sure, Dick," he said; "for I would not have had the opportunity."

"Well, you are more than welcome to what I have done, Dan," said Dick. "I congratulate you and wish you all possible happiness."

Emily never knew how the man died that she had looked upon as her father for so many years.

Dick and Dan went back to the patriot encampment at Whitemarsh, and soon afterward the battle of Germantown was fought.

THE END.

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